



MELNIKOV
BRATVA
BOOK THREE

PAVED IN

Rage

A DARK MAFIA ROMANCE

SONJA GREY

Paved in Rage

A Dark Mafia Romance

Melnikov Bratva

Book 3

OceanofPDF.com

Sonja Grey

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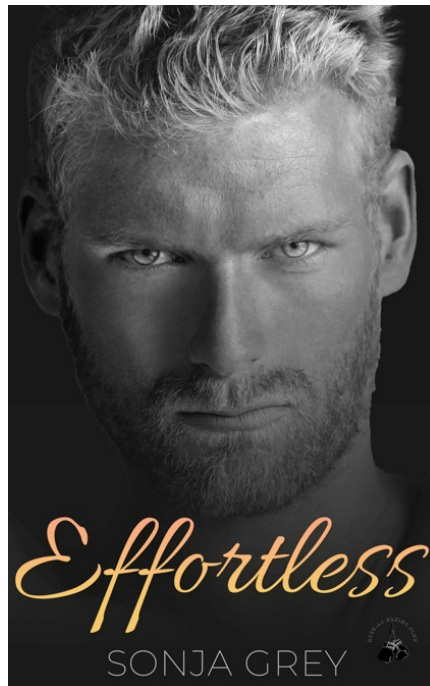
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Also by Sonja Grey

All series are interconnected, unless noted, and can be read as stand-alones, but they're more enjoyable if you read them in order.

All are in KU!

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Medvedev Bratva

Devil from Moscow

Bratva Devil

Filthy Devil

Melnikov Bratva

(Should be read in order)

Paved in Blood

Paved in Venom

Paved in Rage

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Blurb

“I’ve changed my mind, *malinkaya*....I’ve decided to keep you.”

Jolene:

A violent underground fighter and a Bratva boss.

Lev Melnikov is a walking red flag, but I can’t stay away.

I need him to teach me how to fight so I can protect myself.

Our arrangement is simple...until it’s not.

Being close to him and feeling his sweaty body against mine makes it impossible to not want more.

And once I start touching, I can’t stop.

I know he’s dangerous.

I know I should stay away.

But I also know I won’t, because every part of me is already his.

He just needs to take it.

Lev:

Violence and rage—it’s all I know.

Until I meet her.

She makes me want things that a man like me doesn’t deserve.

I can’t bring her into my life and put her in danger, no matter how much I might want to keep her for myself.

But fate has other plans.

Now she’s mine, bought and paid for and too damn innocent for what I want to do to her.

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Trigger Warning

This book contains all the elements you would expect from a dark mafia romance.

This is not a fade-to-black book...like at all. Expect dark, on-page content.
This book is not recommended for sensitive readers.

This story does contain physical violence and bullying against the FMC (not by the MMC!), abusive and alcoholic parents, as well as graphic violence, explicit sex scenes, including anal, somno (with permission!), a pierced MMC, and mature language.

Sex trafficking plays a big part in this entire series.

The men I write are fiercely loyal and protective. They will kill anyone (seriously, anyone!) who dares to hurt the women they love, but they're big softies for their women. They tend to fall hard and fast, and there will never be any cheating in my books!

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Prologue

Lev
20 years old

I'm already in a shitty mood by the time I arrive at my old apartment building. I try my best to never come back here, but it's been a while since I checked on my mom, and I can't put it off any longer. I shouldn't give a fuck. She never did a damn thing to help me when my dad started throwing punches, but she's my mom, and I can't turn my back on her, not completely anyway.

When I was younger, I'd throw myself in front of her, taking my dad's angry fists so that she didn't have to, but as I got older, my pity for her started to turn to hate. She never did a goddamn thing to help us. She'd just bury herself in the closest bottle she could find and tell me that my dad didn't mean it, that he'd feel terrible about it once he sobered up.

Like that's supposed to make me feel better.

Ignoring the elevator that's always broken, I take the stairs that smell of piss, grateful that I no longer have to live in this fucking dump. Thanks to Danil's hacking skills, the five of us can afford a nicer apartment in the heart of downtown Moscow. We can afford a lot of things now. The years I spent barely able to pay for anything are gone. My shoes are no longer held together with fucking duct tape, and I don't have to lie in bed at night with my stomach growling, the hunger pains keeping me awake for hours while I wish for sleep so I no longer have to feel anything.

Once I'm at the door, I don't bother knocking. I step in, and the sight that greets me has me seeing red. My mom is passed out on the couch, but

even from the doorway, I can see how swollen and bruised her face is. My hands clench into tight fists as I barrel through the small apartment until I find my dad in the bedroom. He's just come out of the shower, and when he sees me, he gives me the same smug smirk I've seen a million times while he runs a towel over his head.

"What the fuck are you doing here?"

I take a step closer. "I told you I'd fucking kill you if you hit her again."

He tosses the towel on the bed and waves off my words like they're nothing. "She's fine. I just had too much to drink, and she didn't know when to keep her fucking mouth shut. It's nothing."

My dad is not a small man, and he's kept himself in shape. My mom's not a frail-looking woman, but she could never stand a chance against him. He's a good fighter. He used to box when he was younger, and it's because of him that I got into fighting. When I was very young, it was because I wanted to be just like him. Then I got older, and I wanted to learn so I could protect myself from him. Circle of life, I guess.

When he sees how pissed I still am, he gives a soft laugh while he steps into a pair of jeans. "You always were overprotective of her. I didn't see her ever coming to your defense." He gives another harsh laugh that grates on every damn nerve I have. He knows exactly how to get under my skin. He always has.

"No, I remember her watching as I beat the shit out of your pathetic ass over and over again. She'd always spread her legs for me after it was over, not even caring that I was still covered in your blood." He shakes his head with another laugh. "Fucking pathetic, and yet you kept taking the beatings that were meant for her."

I look at my dad, the bastard responsible for bringing me into this world, and point my finger at him. I thought I'd be shaking with rage, but I'm surprisingly calm. I've waited a long time for this.

"Meet me in the alley," I tell him and then turn and walk away. He knows what it means, and he knows I'll think he's a fucking pussy if he doesn't show. His pride will never allow him to back down. We're handling this the old-fashioned way, the way my neighborhood has been settling disputes since long before I was born.

Taking the stairs two at a time, I make it outside in just a couple of minutes and head around to the alley that runs along the back of our shitty

building. A few neighborhood kids see me, and it doesn't take long before word starts to spread.

"You finally gonna take him out, Lev?" one of my neighbors asks. Leonid's in his late seventies and has seen me walking around with black eyes and busted lips more times than I can remember.

"I am," I tell him, and he gives me a big enough smile to show that he's missing most of his teeth.

"My money's on you kid," he says, pulling out a few crumpled bills from his pocket. "Don't make me look bad."

"I don't plan on it." I step to the middle of the alley. The crowd grows as we wait. Money exchanges hands, bets are made, and I can feel the bloodlust, the excitement, and it makes my heart start to race as adrenaline rushes through me. Nothing makes me feel more alive than a good fight, and I've been waiting for this one my whole damn life.

I know the second my dad steps into the alley. The hairs stand up on the back of my neck and the crowd grows quiet. When I turn to face him, I'm already resigned to the outcome. One of us will not be leaving this alley, and it sure as fuck isn't going to be me lying dead on the ground.

He steps closer and eyes the crowd before scowling at me. "You sure you want to do this, son?"

"Don't fucking call me that. You were never a father to me, just some piece of shit who got my mom pregnant."

His eyes, the same light blue as mine, narrow in anger. I know the feeling well. We may be very different men, but there's a lot about us that's the same, and the rage boiling through his veins right now is the same rage that runs through mine.

"You want to take out your piercings first?" he taunts with a laugh.

I smile and turn my head slightly, giving him a good view of the lip ring I've had since I was fifteen and the eyebrow piercing that came a few years later. My dick is also pierced, but I'm not about to whip that out and show him. I recently had the last two rungs put in the Jacob's Ladder that runs along the underside of my cock, and it still aches like a motherfucker. The physical discomfort just adds to my already pissed-off mood.

"I'm good," I tell him, taking a few steps closer. "I don't intend to let you get close enough to rip them out."

The corner of his mouth lifts up. "I'm not going to go easy on you just because you're my son. If we do this, then we're doing it."

“I wouldn’t have it any other way, and once I get you on the ground, old man, I’m not stopping.”

“You really think you have what it takes to kill me?”

Now it’s my turn to laugh. “I’ve been dreaming about this for a long time, and killing doesn’t bother me.”

It’s true. My brothers, my true family, and I have been slowly working our way into the Safronov Bratva, the most dangerous Bratva in Moscow. We’ve been doing their dirty work, proving ourselves to them, and I learned pretty quickly that killing doesn’t bother me. I’d be lying if I said I didn’t enjoy it. It’s a nice outlet for all my anger.

“Killing strangers isn’t the same thing as killing your own flesh and blood,” my dad warns.

“You’re not my dad. You stopped being my dad the first time you beat the shit out of me. I was ten. Do you remember that, you fucking bastard?”

He shrugs. “Can’t say that I do.”

The callous dismissal of what I’ve just asked is more than enough to tip me over the edge. I bring my fists up to protect my face and glare at him. He does the same, and as soon as he throws his first punch, it’s on. My dad may be a good boxer, but he’s not as good as me. Our neighbors cheer, egging us both on as the alley fills with the sounds of flesh hitting flesh and the pained grunts when one of us lands a good hit.

My hands are going to be in bad shape tomorrow, but I don’t hold back. Every hit I make is mixed with a memory—the time he busted out three of my baby teeth for spilling his beer, the time he put my mom in the hospital with several broken ribs, all the black eyes I had to walk around with, the shame and anger, all of it goes into this fight.

When my next punch breaks his jaw, I see the surprise and fear that flashes across his face, and all it takes is one more punch to put him on the ground. A bigger crowd has gathered around us, all of them cheering my name when I start kicking. My dad tries to curl up into a ball, but a few more well-aimed kicks keep him on his back, all those organs left vulnerable. The next few minutes are a blur. I kick until he stops moving, and then I get down on the ground and start punching. By the time I stop, I’m gasping and covered in blood, and the man beneath me is no longer recognizable. Chest heaving, I look around at the crowd. Some are cringing, a few women are looking away, one gives me a flirty wink, and most of the men are smiling and collecting their winnings.

I stand up, knowing the cops won't be called. When they eventually show up, there will be no witnesses. No one will have seen a thing. That's how it works around here. Rats end up gutted and strung up as a warning. They've all learned to keep their mouths shut.

"Better get home and get cleaned up," Leonid says, walking closer and patting me on the back. He tries to offer me some of the winnings, but I wave it away.

"Keep it," I tell him, knowing he needs it way more than me. Plus, I don't want any money from this. Getting to see the bastard beneath me take his last breath is more than enough of a reward.

Standing, I run a bloody, swollen hand through my too-long hair and start walking back to the apartment building. I have one last thing to do. My mom is just starting to come around when I walk back into the living room. She sees the blood on me and parts her mouth in a gasp.

"What did you do?" The question comes out in an angry hiss.

"What I should've done a long fucking time ago."

She tries to stand, but she's still too drunk. All she does is sway before falling back onto the couch cushion. I let out a disgusted sigh and take out all the money I have, tossing it on the small table in front of her.

"Try not to drink it all. I'll transfer more money into your account in a month."

"You're a monster," she screams at me, but she doesn't throw the money back in my face, just reaches for the bottle next to her and takes a long drink, wincing when it hits her cut lip.

I look at my mom, knowing it's the last time I'll ever see her, because I'm done with this shit. I'm not mad at her anymore, but I no longer want her in my life.

"Goodbye, Mom," I tell her and then turn and leave. It's time to go back to my real family.

The ride further into the city doesn't take too long, not even with the Friday-night traffic. I've never been one for rules, and I'm not afraid to weave my motorcycle in and out of tight spaces. It sends another rush of adrenaline through me while I laugh at the angry honks and middle fingers directed at me.

Pulling into the parking garage, I park and then walk over to the nice elevator that's always up and running and never smells like piss. We'd all been thrilled to move into this building. Poverty is something we're all

familiar with, and that means we were all more than happy to walk away from it. None of us give a fuck that all the money we have is stolen. Danil syphons it from men and women who are so ridiculously rich that they'll never notice, especially not with the way he covers his tracks.

When the doors open, I step onto the plush carpet and walk to the only door on this floor. It's a large penthouse that's plenty big for all of us, and when I step in, Vitaly takes one look at me and smiles.

"You finally did it, didn't you?"

"It was time," is all I say, shutting the door behind me and walking to the bar in the corner so I can pour myself a large drink.

He comes over and takes the glass I fill for him. Eyeing the cheek that I know is swelling up nicely, the only decent punch my father got to my face, Vitaly laughs. "If you weren't so insane as to put all that metal in your dick, we could go out and celebrate your victory."

"I still can't believe you did that," Roman says, walking into the room.

I give them both a shrug. "To each his own." It may hurt like hell at the moment, and it may mean I need to be abstinent for way longer than I'd like, but I've always been drawn to piercings and tattoos. I like the pain. I fucking crave it.

The front door opens right before Alina comes running in with a big smile on her face. She looks back at Matvey, making sure he's still behind her. He comes in with Danil, both of them holding bags of food. Alina splits her time between here and her mom's apartment. She wants to live here with us, but Roman worries about our lifestyle. She's only thirteen, and with us working for the Safronov Bratva now, it's safer if she stays with their mom most nights. Tonight isn't one of those nights, though, and I can tell she's ecstatic about sleeping over.

She stops in front of me and gets a worried look on her face. "Who hit you?"

I smile at the pissed-off tone of her voice. She may be a lanky young girl, but she's fiercely protective of us, just like we all are with one another. We may be a family by choice, but that doesn't make our bond any less strong. If anything, it just strengthens it.

Kissing the top of her head, I laugh and say, "Don't worry, the other guy looks worse."

"I hope you killed the bastard," she says, making me laugh while Roman groans and says, "Language, Alina."

She smiles up at me and rolls her eyes, but I can see the love in them. She's at the age where she likes to test her boundaries, but she can never stay mad at her older brother. Hell, she can never stay mad at any of us. That's how we all are with one another. It's always been this way.

Alina and I join the others at the table, and I'm not at all surprised when she leaves my side to snag the empty chair next to Matvey. She's been in love with him for as long as I can remember. We keep waiting for her to outgrow it, but if anything it just seems to get stronger every year. Ever since the fire when he was fifteen, Matvey's closed himself off, but he always manages a smile for Alina. She's been with him through the worst of it, and even though she's way too young and I know there's no way in hell he thinks of her as anything other than his friend's little sister, I can't help but wonder if maybe one day it'll change into something else. Judging by the huge smile she gives him when he passes her a plate, she's desperately hoping it will.

We've just finished eating when there's a knock at the door. Vitaly grins and smacks my back on the way to open it.

"Who'd you invite over?" I ask him.

He laughs and before he opens it, he says, "I met a couple girls earlier."

I roll my eyes at him. Vitaly's always meeting girls and inviting them over. It drives Roman crazy when Alina is here. As soon as he opens the door, I hear a very feminine giggle before two long-legged women walk in, one blonde, one brunette. The blonde leans into Vitaly, clearly claiming her stake on him while the brunette smiles and walks further into the apartment. She scans the room, running predatory, hungry eyes over all of us before settling on Matvey. He's in jeans and a dark hoodie. He's taken to wearing them since the fire. He likes his scars covered, and when he sees her looking at him, he turns away, making it clear he's not interested. She doesn't take the hint. They never do. It's something about his unattainability that makes every woman zero in on him. They can see he's wounded, and they want to be the woman to make him feel better. It never works. He can't stand to be touched, and they're always so surprised when he doesn't fuck them.

As soon as she starts to walk towards him, I see the look on Alina's face and grab her arm before she can run over and claw the woman's eyes out. Leaning down to her, I whisper, "Just wait, Alina."

She's not happy about it, but she stops struggling to get out of my grip. We watch together as the woman saunters over to a very bored-looking Matvey. Her tiny red dress leaves very little to the imagination, and when she bends over, resting a hand on the arm of the chair he's sitting in, she makes sure to angle herself so he can see straight down her dress. She doesn't notice that he doesn't bother looking.

Alina lets out a pained groan, but she doesn't try to move. I almost think she's going to be okay handling this, but then the woman reaches a hand out, and Alina loses it. She jerks her arm out of my grasp and runs over to him while yelling, "Don't touch him!"

Her valiant efforts to protect Matvey aren't needed, though, because Matvey's already smacked her hand away before her fingers can touch him. The woman turns and glares at Alina, but Alina doesn't back down. I'm not surprised. She'd fight to the death for Matvey without a moment's hesitation.

"Who the fuck are you?" Her tone is bad enough, but it's the small laugh she gives when looking down at the young girl that really seals the deal.

"She's one of us," Matvey says in his gravelly voice, "and you aren't, so get the fuck out."

Alina beams with pride at Matvey's words and, proving she's a Melnikov to her core, has the gall to take a step closer before pointing at the door. "You heard him. Get the fuck out."

Danil gives a soft laugh from beside me, and for once Roman doesn't say anything about the language. He just watches the woman, making sure she doesn't try anything stupid. If she takes a swing at his little sister, she's a dead fucking woman. She must sense how much danger she's in because she lets out a forced laugh and takes a step back.

"Whatever. You're all fucking crazy," she mutters before walking back to where her friend is still latched onto Vitaly. She stands by him like he's going to side with her, but no surprise to any of us, Vitaly laughs and pushes both women out the door, shutting it in their surprised faces.

When they bang on the door, he laughs and yells, "Fuck off!"

"You really know how to pick 'em," I tell him, pouring myself another drink.

He smiles and shrugs. "It's a gift. I'd say we could go and pick out a couple more at a club, but your dick is out of commission, so there goes that

fun idea.”

“Why is it out of commission?” Alina asks while Roman groans and points a finger at Vitaly.

“Stop saying shit in front of her,” Roman says, and then turns to Alina. “It just is. No more questions, damn it.”

Alina laughs. Her eyes are lit up with amusement when she looks at me. “Did you break it?”

“No,” I tell her while trying not to laugh. The last thing I want to do is have a dick conversation with her, so I quickly down my drink and raise a pierced brow at Roman. “You ready?”

He nods and disappears down the hall to get his gun. Mine’s already tucked into the waistband of my jeans, resting against the small of my back. It’s our turn to watch the streets for the Safronov Bratva. I’m guessing my dad won’t be the only bastard I kill tonight. I’d like nothing more than to ice my knuckles and dick, but that’ll have to wait. Tonight, we have work to do. Danil grabs his messenger bag with his computer. We need his help to hack into security cameras and gather information.

Before we leave, Vitaly sits down on the other side of Alina and grabs a remote control. “All right, I’m taking your high score tonight.”

“In your dreams.” She laughs and holds out another remote to Matvey. He takes it, giving her a small smile, which is more than anyone else gets, before settling back for what looks to be a long night of gaming.

“Listen to Vitaly and Matvey,” Roman tells her.

“I will,” she says, barely taking her eyes off the screen. She’s damn good at that racing game, and none of us can beat her high score. It’s annoying to get your ass kicked by a thirteen-year-old.

Leaving the penthouse, we make our way to the elevator while Roman checks his phone to see if we’ve been given any new orders for tonight. He shakes his head at my questioning look.

“No, nothing new. We just need to watch the streets we’ve been assigned to and kill anyone who causes trouble.”

“Same old thing,” Danil says with a sigh, giving voice to what we’re all thinking.

We may work for the Safronov Bratva for now, but soon we’re going to be taking over. My brothers and I have big plans, and that doesn’t include us being subservient to anyone. We were born to rule this fucking city.

Brothers in blood, in life, and in death.

It's us against everyone else. Family is everything, and we're all willing to die for ours.

It was a good plan, a plan that would've worked, but everything changed when Alina was taken. Our family doesn't work without her, and we're going to do whatever it takes to get her back. Our path may be paved in blood and venom and every vile thing we've had to wade through while trying to find the sick fucks behind her abduction, but we're closing in quickly because now we have a name.

The Lebedev Bratva has no idea what's coming for it. We're going to get close to them, befriend them, become invaluable to them, just like we did with the Safronov family, and then we're going to fucking destroy them. The rage we've all been carrying for almost a year and a half is about to boil over, and when it does, there will be no stopping it. It's going to destroy every motherfucker in its path, and I can't fucking wait.

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Chapter 1

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Jolene

“Are you even fucking listening to me?”

I pull my earbuds out and fight the eye roll that I desperately want to give as I turn and face my older brother. Sebastian is five years older than me, and has been a giant pain in my ass since the day I was born. I swear he's hated me since my first breath, because it was also our mother's last, and he's made it his life's mission to make sure I never forget it.

“I hear you, Bastian,” I tell him. “I'm not going to forget anything. I'll pick up your protein bars and drinks, and I'll bring it with me to the fight tonight.”

He takes a step closer, crowding my space and reminding me how much bigger he is than me. I need to learn to back down, for my own safety if nothing else, but I can never seem to do it. When he gets in my face, all I want to do is punch him. Unfortunately, I lack the know-how and muscle tone to do it. A girl can dream, though, and one day I'm going to kick his ass.

“One day you're going to learn to keep your big mouth shut.”

He's already raising his hand, so I might as well go all in. I give him the smirk he despises and say, “Maybe one day, Bastian, but not today, you stupid fuck.”

He backhands me, and the pain is quick and sharp, radiating through my head and down my neck. *Fucking jackass*. I bite my lip to keep from groaning in pain and cover my burning cheek with my hand. He digs his fingers into my chin and tilts my face up to his. Eyes the same hazel as mine glare at me with hatred.

“You’re a monster,” he growls. “You killed our mom, and I wish you’d never been born.”

“I hate you,” I whisper, but even as I say it, my heart aches from what he’s just said. He’s right. I did kill our mom, and if I’d never been born, then she’d still be here.

“Not as much as I hate you,” Sebastian spits out, letting me go with one last shove that slams me against the wall. “Now get your ass moving and go and get my shit.”

I refuse to let him see how much he’s hurt me, both physically and emotionally, so I keep my head down and run out of the room, grabbing the keys on the way. I take my dad’s old truck because there’s no way in hell I’m going to ask to take my brother’s pride and joy. I’m not even allowed to breathe heavily around his ’67 Mustang.

The drive to the store doesn’t take long, and once I’m there I take a look at the damage, cringing at the bright red handprint marking half my face. This isn’t the first time I’ve had to walk around bearing his marks. With a sigh, I pull the hood of my sweatshirt up and keep my head down as I speed walk across the parking lot and into the grocery store.

I head straight for the protein bars, wondering how in the hell my life has come to this. It’s not like it’s a big shocker that I’m stuck living at home with my absent father and ass of an older brother. When I graduated high school, no one was pointing at me and thinking, *now there’s a girl that’s going places*. Nope. If they were pointing at me, it was to say things like, *Isn’t that the Rousseau girl? Didn’t her brother get arrested last week for beating the hell out of some guy?*

They weren’t wrong. The Rousseau name is synonymous with fighting, poverty, and a healthy dose of low-class. I’ve tried hard to prove people wrong, but I’m not fooling anyone, least of all myself. We come from a shit neighborhood, my brother is heavily involved in illegal fighting, and I’m the dumbass who helps him. It’s not like I really have a choice, though. He does give me a cut of his winnings. Even if it is a small one, it’s still way more than I could make at some shit minimum-wage job, and it’s tax free. Obviously, I don’t plan on doing this forever, but I’m only nineteen. I’ve got plenty of time to figure out the nine-to-five plan.

While I pick out all of Sebastian’s favorite flavors, my mind wanders to the upcoming fight tonight. My brother wins most of them, but there’s one

man that he's never been able to beat, the one man that *no one's* been able to beat.

Lev Melnikov.

If I allowed myself a moment of complete honesty, I might admit that he's the real reason I'm sticking around. I've been obsessed with that man since I first saw him fight a few months ago. I always hide in the background, watching the fights from darkened corners so I'm invisible to everyone else. Watching Lev in motion is like watching a fucking piece of moving art. I've never seen anything like it. The man is huge, one giant wall of tattooed muscle, but he's downright graceful when he fights. His light blue eyes remain laser-focused on whoever he's fighting, and none of them stand a chance against him.

I think about him more than I should, and for my own good I need to stop. I've watched him leave with so many different women after his fights, and every time I see one of them climb on the back of his motorcycle before he speeds off, a part of me dies. He doesn't seem to have a girlfriend, though. It's always a different woman, never the same one twice, and the fact that I'm clinging to that tidbit lets me know exactly how pathetic I've become.

Throwing Sebastian's protein bars into the basket, I add in a few sports drinks and then head for the self-checkout. I'd rather not have to face anyone with my cheek still bright red, but it's not like it would matter much if I did. I'm always amazed at how easily people will turn away from something they don't want to see. I've come into this store with way more than a red cheek, and no one ever says a goddamn thing. They look away and pretend they didn't see it, which is fine by me. It's not like I'm going to be pressing charges. I'm not an idiot. That would be a death sentence for me. Sebastian may be my brother, but he'd kill me in a second if he thought I'd betray him and involve the police. Blood is thicker than water, my ass. He'd kill me without a second thought.

After I've paid for everything, I keep my hood pulled low and head back to the truck. I'd grabbed myself a candy bar and coke and after I've driven to the abandoned warehouse where the fights take place, I park and eat my snack while I sink lower in the seat and wait. It's going to be a while, but it's not like I have anything better to do.

The sound of a motorcycle jolts me from the light sleep I'd fallen into, and as soon as I see how dark it is, I check my watch and hiss out a loud

curse. My brother is going to kill me. I grab the bag and scramble out of the truck, barely allowing myself a second to appreciate the sight of Lev pulling up on his black motorcycle. The lot outside the warehouse is full of cars, and Lev is just pulling off his helmet when I race by, keeping my head ducked low because if I look at him this closely, I know I'll freeze in place like a lamb before the wolf.

The warehouse is packed tonight, and the fights are already well under way. Chain-link fence surrounds the middle of the floor, forming a wide circle around the two fighters inside. I push my way through the crowd while they cheer and holler around me. It used to be a fairly small operation, but a few weeks ago, new faces started appearing, and the bets started rising. Now the place is full of men in suits and suddenly no one is worried about the cops showing up. I don't know who in the hell these new men are, but they give me the fucking creeps.

As soon as I've pushed my way through, I sneak around the corner and find my brother. He's leaning against the wall, watching the two fighters who are currently attempting to kill one another, and as soon as he sees me, he scowls and holds out his hand for the bag. He's in nothing but a pair of workout shorts, and every inch of him is radiating anger. He's revved up for the fight that's about to happen and also pissed that I'm late. It's a lethal combination, and even I know to keep my damn mouth shut when he's this riled.

I put the bag in his hands and quickly take a step back while he digs out his sports drink and opens it up. He takes a few quick swallows and then grabs one of the protein bars. Once he's had a few bites, he takes another drink and then tosses it all aside. I wait a few more seconds before finally daring to speak.

"Who are you fighting tonight?"

He nods to the fight going on, and when I look over, I have just enough time to see one of them throw a punch that knocks the other guy straight onto his ass. He stays down, which means my brother will be fighting the angry-looking motherfucker that's still standing. I've seen him around. He's one of the best fighters, but he's nowhere near as good as Lev.

"Looks like it'll be me and Tommy for this round, and when I win, I'll be fighting that fucking Russian bastard who thinks he's untouchable."

"You're fighting him tonight?" I ask, and when Sebastian turns his angry gaze to me, I wish I'd kept my mouth shut.

“I am.” He studies me for a second. As much as I hate my brother, he’s not stupid, and he heard something in my tone that he didn’t like. “You don’t think I can take him?”

It takes everything I have to not say, *You’ve never been able to in the past. Why should tonight be any different?* But I don’t feel like getting another sharp smack, so I just shrug and say, “No one’s beaten him yet.”

He takes a step closer and points his finger at me. Without his shirt on, the weight difference is glaringly obvious. It doesn’t help that I’m also a good ten inches shorter than him. I never hear what he’s about to say to me, because he’s distracted when a feminine voice screams his name and then throws herself in his arms. I’m more than happy to step aside and let her have him. He cups her ass and swings her around while she gives an annoying giggle. Women throw themselves at Sebastian all the time, and it makes me cringe every time I see it.

Not wanting to watch them make out like a couple of horny teenagers, I put my focus back on the fighting circle. Two men have opened up the gate and run in, checking to make sure the man on the ground is still breathing. It wouldn’t be the first time someone’s died here. As soon as he feels a pulse, he nods his head and they each grab an arm and start to drag the unconscious guy out, leaving a trail of blood behind them. I want to learn how to fight so I can protect myself, but I’m not sure I’ll ever understand the desire to willingly step into a ring just so I can have my ass handed to me.

Once the guy’s out, everyone starts chanting my brother’s name. I wish they wouldn’t. He already has a big enough ego, and screaming fans and women lining up to fuck him is not making him a nicer person. I thought that maybe once he started fighting that it would take some of that anger away, but it’s only made it worse. It’s multiplied it and made his already short fuse even shorter.

Sebastian laughs and smacks the smiling brunette’s ass. She’s still trying to ram her tongue down his throat, just as thrilled by the attention as he is, but he finally sets her down and raises his hands as he walks through the gate that’s been opened for him. Tommy downs a bottle of water before walking out to meet my brother in the middle. They give each other a quick nod, but then it’s all business. There aren’t any refs here. No one is going to step in and stop things if they go too far or if someone lands a cheap shot.

This fight ends when the other doesn't get up. Whether that's because they choose to stay down or because they're unable to get up doesn't matter.

Sebastian's groupie stands next to me, jumping up and down and clapping her hands when the fight starts and my brother lands a few good punches. I haven't met this particular fan of his, but I don't need to. They're all the same. I look away from the heavily made-up face and the enormous boobs that bounce with every jump she takes and turn my attention back to the fight. My brother's good, and I'm not surprised at all when he does a quick combination of punches that land Tommy on his ass. The crowd goes crazy. We all know it's over. There's no way in hell Tommy's getting himself out of this mess.

I keep watching, desensitized to the violence that I've seen my whole life. I'm not at all surprised when Sebastian keeps punching him long after he's passed out. My brother's a dick like that. Eventually, he grows bored and stands back up, raising his bloody hands to his adoring fans.

"Oh my god, your brother is so fucking hot," the girl next to me says.

I ignore her because all my attention is on the man who's entering the pen. Lev doesn't walk in raising his hands like a buffoon. He doesn't need the praise like my brother does. He's here because he loves the fight. I see it every time he steps through the gate and faces a new man. He *needs* this, and he loves every fucking second of it. My eyes run over his bare chest, and I want to weep because my need to touch him is so fucking strong and I can't do a goddamn thing about it. I want to murder every single woman who's been lucky enough to touch him, to have him inside them, hell, to even be close enough to breathe the same air that he breathes. I want to kill them all.

Instead of doing what I want, I break my rule about staying hidden and step closer. I keep walking until my fingers are gripping the chain-link fence. All my focus is on Lev. He walks to the center, stopping a couple of feet from Sebastian. He's a few inches taller than my brother, and even though my brother is ripped, Lev's got way more muscle on him. Every inch of this man is hard and defined, and the tattoos that cover him make him look like a beautiful piece of art. The lip ring that I've thought about running my tongue over more times than I can count, is a taunt to the other fighters. No one fights with piercings, but Lev does, and no one ever gets close enough to rip them out.

The room quiets as the tension builds. It's a well-matched fight, but I have no doubt who the winner's going to be. I'm going to need to avoid my brother like the plague for the next few days, because he's going to be even more pissed than usual. Lev gives my brother a nod, but Sebastian doesn't return it. Lev waits for him to throw the first punch, and when he does, Lev easily avoids it. It's pretty much downhill from there for my brother. Sebastian manages to get a few hits, but they're superficial and don't do anything to slow Lev down.

My fingers grip the fence tighter as I suck in a quick breath. Lev is beautiful to watch. His movements are equal parts graceful and deadly. His light blue eyes never lose their focus, and soon he's dripping sweat and all I can think about is how badly I want to lick him clean. When he lands a brutal blow to my brother's jaw, knocking him back onto his ass, I can't help but smile. He's doing to him everything that I've always wished I could, and I fucking love it. Sebastian tries to get back up, so Lev punches him a few more times. My smile turns into a gasp of pure shock when Lev looks up and meets my eyes. It's the first time we've ever made direct eye contact, and I feel it in every part of my body. It mainly settles right between my legs, though. He makes my pussy throb from thirty feet away, and when he looks down again, I let out a soft whimper of protest because I want the connection back. It's the first time I've ever gotten a piece of him, and I'm not ready to lose it.

I'm already cursing my own pathetic stupidity about reading so much into a five-second look when Sebastian's groupie says, "Tell your brother sorry, but that's the guy I'm going home with."

"What?" I ask before I can think better of it.

Her red lips turn up into a predatory smile when she points at Lev. "That's the guy I'm fucking tonight."

And with those wonderful parting words, she turns and walks off, leaving me with an aching heart and lungs that feel way too small for the amount of air I need right now. I clutch the fence so tightly it feels like the metal is digging into my flesh. I look up in just enough time to see Lev walk away. There's a crowd of suits waiting for him, but he doesn't look thrilled to see them. Without thinking about it, I start to walk around the fence, wanting to get closer. I don't know why I feel the need to watch my nightmare come to life, but I do. I've always been a sucker for pain, I guess, and I never learned when to quit.

Everyone wants to congratulate the winner. My brother is slowly getting to his feet, but he's already forgotten as men and women flock to Lev. I stay on the outskirts, easily keeping track of him because he's several inches taller than everyone else, and there's no hiding those broad, tattooed shoulders. I'd know his body anywhere. I watch him take a stack of money from some guy in a suit before pushing through the crowd and heading towards his motorcycle.

Faster. Walk faster. I chant the words over and over again, and I start to feel a glimmer of hope when he grabs his helmet, but then I hear a familiar voice yell Lev's name and a part of me dies. He turns to see the woman who had just minutes before been my brother's biggest fan and my shoulders fall, every part of me deflating as I watch her give him a sexy smile and rest her hand on the curve of her hip in a move that's effortlessly sexy and something that I could never pull off in a million years.

I'm too far away to hear what she says, but I don't need to know the words. Everything about her screams *if you want me, you can have me*. I'm just about to turn away because it turns out I can't handle watching this. I feel like I'm going to be sick, but then Lev does something I'm not at all expecting. He shakes his gorgeous head and waves a hand at her in the universal *get the fuck out of here* motion. I'm not sure who's more shocked, me or the groupie that I'm pretty sure has never been turned down before in her life. She storms off in a rage while Lev puts his helmet on and starts his bike.

Before I can talk myself out of it, I run for my dad's truck. If I hurry, I can follow him. He'll never have to know, and I'll get to see him for a few more minutes. Just this once. I won't ever do it again. It's a one-time thing. I try to convince myself of this as I pull out of the parking lot and follow the black motorcycle that's quickly speeding down the street. It's busy tonight and I almost lose him a couple of times, but when I see him taking a right-hand turn, I do the same and then slow down so he won't notice I'm here. I follow him down unfamiliar streets and into some truly nasty-looking areas. I'm just about to turn around and get my ass back to safety when he parks his bike and shuts it off.

I parallel park along the street and quickly kill my headlights before ducking down a bit. There are a few guys leaning against the nearest building, but they don't pay any attention to Lev. They are eyeing my truck, though, and probably wondering what the fuck I'm doing. When Lev starts

walking down the dark alley that runs behind the liquor store I'm parked in front of, I decide that maybe it's best not to know everything about Lev Melnikov. I followed him here, which was dumb, but I'm not so stupid that I'm going to jump out and follow him down a dark and dangerous alley.

I do the smart thing for once in my life, and I just get the fuck out. I'm still curious as I drive away, but there's something dangerous about Lev, and I'm not sure it's the greatest idea for him to catch me spying on him. I have a feeling he wouldn't care for that.

I debate whether I should just go home or go back to make sure Sebastian is okay and at the last minute decide to make two good decisions in one night, a new record for me, and go to check on him. If I don't, it'll be my ass on the line and he's already going to be in a foul mood from losing the fight.

The parking lot is nearly empty when I get back to the warehouse, but there are still several people hanging around, having a few drinks and talking about the fights. I find my brother talking with some other men, and I can't say I'm horribly surprised to see his groupie has found her way back to him. If my brother had any idea that she'd thrown herself at Lev, I think he'd probably kill her. She's really playing it up now, sitting in his lap and oohing and ahing over his busted face.

When she sees me, her face pales a bit. She doesn't know I saw her with Lev, but we both know I heard what she said to me before she ran off. She can relax, though, no way in hell am I going to rat her out. I'm not thrilled with what she tried to do, but that doesn't mean I want to sit back and watch my brother beat the shit out of her. Plus, she's putting Sebastian in a good mood with all her over-the-top attention, and I sure as hell don't want to stop that. I'm guessing the big tits she has pushed up near his face are what's really cheering him up after getting his ass kicked yet again by Lev. I keep my mouth shut, and she visibly relaxes before giving Sebastian another pouty smile.

"You did so good, baby," she purrs in his ear while running a wet cloth over the dried blood that's covering most of his face. "That guy isn't nearly as good as you. He just got lucky tonight."

It takes everything I have to not bark out a laugh at the load of bullshit she's feeding him.

"Thanks, Nikki," Sebastian says, and when he grips her ass and starts to grind her against him, I take that as my clue to get the fuck out.

The men still standing around him laugh when she starts to rock her hips, loving all the attention she's now getting. If I'd known Nikki was gutsy enough to go back to Sebastian, I would've just driven home and saved myself the trip. Tossing my hood back up, I make my way back to the truck and get the hell away from this place, but even as I escape it, all I can think about is coming back tomorrow night in the hopes that I'll catch another glimpse of Lev.

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Chapter 2

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Lev

When I get into the kitchen, everyone else is already in there. I give Simona, Danil's wife, a smile as I walk past to grab a bottle of water from the fridge. My knuckles are still looking rough from last night's fight, but I'm so used to the ache that I barely notice it.

"I still don't see why Simona and I can't go." Emily looks up at her husband, but Roman's having none of it. He smiles down at her and kisses her head while keeping a protective hand on the baby bump that's just barely starting to show.

"Just because we've agreed to work with Dominic," Roman tells her, "doesn't mean I'm willing to put your life or the life of our baby in danger. We're meeting him in his downtown office, which means his men will be all over the place. I might believe his story about his sister, but that doesn't mean I trust him with you."

"Agreed," Danil says, wrapping an arm around his wife and pulling her closer.

Simona smiles and looks up at him like he's her entire world. I still can't believe two of my brothers are married and both their wives are pregnant. It's been a wild few months, and I don't think anyone was expecting all this to happen after moving to America, but it's been good. It's nice to see them so happy, and I'd be lying if I said I wasn't pretty fucking excited about becoming an uncle. I might be a mean motherfucker, but not even I can resist a cute baby.

Vitaly walks over and smacks my back. "Hard to believe we're the last remaining single guys," he says.

I take a drink and raise a brow at him. “You going to be the next one to get married?”

He laughs and shakes his head. “Not a chance in hell. I’m not so sure I could ever be happy with just one woman.”

Emily laughs and looks over at us. “I hear you, Vitaly, and I’m going to be the first to laugh when you fall head over heels for someone.”

“That’ll be the fucking day, little sis,” he tells her, nudging my shoulder with his. “Lev and I are going to be the cool single uncles. Our future nephews are going to love hanging out with us.”

Emily and Simona share a look before Simona says, “Vitaly is never babysitting.”

Vitaly laughs and holds up a hand. “I’m just kidding. I promise to not take them to any strip clubs until they’re at least eighteen.”

Roman laughs. “She’s going to kill you, man. Her pregnancy hormones are all over the place lately.”

While Vitaly laughs, I check my watch and say, “Shit, we need to get going.”

Matvey’s already heading towards the private elevator that opens onto the penthouse we all share. Eventually we’ll spread out and have our own houses, but this place is huge and for now it’s the safest option for us. No one is breaking into this fortress. Danil’s in charge of security, and with his wife pregnant, he’s taking no chances. Proving my point, the elevator opens and two of our men step out. Sergei and Aleksandr always come over whenever Emily and Simona have to be left alone. While Danil hands them the laptop with all the security camera feeds on it, I grab the keys for the SUV. I’d rather take my motorcycle, but it’s easier if we all drive together.

Vitaly and I step into the elevator with Matvey while Danil and Roman say their goodbyes. Matvey’s traded his usual jeans and hoodie for an all-black suit, and I can tell he’s anxious to get to the meeting. His entire existence is devoted to finding Alina. It’s slowly killing him, and we all feel the tick of the clock. She’s been gone for almost a year and a half now. Every minute that passes, pushes us closer and closer to the point of no return. How much can she endure? None of us knows what she’s going through, but we all know enough to know it’s not good. All we can do is hope that she can hang on until we reach her. We’re getting close, but it doesn’t feel like it’s happening fast enough.

“What a couple of softies,” Vitaly says, nodding his head to the two brothers that I’ve seen kill men in ways that would make a sane man vomit, yet here they are, murmuring sweet words to their wives and kissing them like they never want to let them go.

When they finally get in the elevator, Matvey pushes the button and we start to descend.

“I can’t believe we’re about to spend the afternoon with the fucking Italians,” Vitaly says, shaking his head in disbelief.

“At least Lev got to shoot him first,” Danil says, repositioning the strap of his messenger bag. The man rarely leaves the penthouse without his computer. He’s gotten better about it since meeting Simona and at least he needs it for today’s meeting. He used to take it with him even when going to the damn grocery store.

“I did,” I say with a smile. Dominic had been trying to get his hands on Simona, thinking Danil had bought her just because he was an ass who wanted to own a woman, but the truth is that he bought her in the hopes that she could tell us who had abducted her. The plan was to let her go afterwards, but they went and fell in love, and there was no way in hell Danil was going to let her go. The same Bratva that took Simona murdered Dominic’s sister and is the one that’s taken Alina, so today is all about setting aside our differences and working together to take down a bigger enemy. The enemy of my enemy is my friend and all that.

When we step into the parking garage, I get in the driver’s side while Roman takes the passenger seat and the rest get in the back. The lunch traffic is the usual nightmare, but the building we’re headed to isn’t that far away, so it doesn’t take long before I’m pulling up to the gate at the parking garage.

“Security is tight,” Roman mutters when we’re forced to wait until a guard walks over.

“What can I do for you today?” the man asks while he eyes me. He takes in the tats and piercings and makes up his mind about me in a matter of seconds. I’m used to it. People look at me and see a thug. They’re not wrong. I am one, but it doesn’t mean I like the judgement I see in his eyes. This guy can fuck right off with his high-and-mighty bullshit. When I don’t back down from his stare, he moves his gaze to Roman and then tries to see into the back. The windows are too dark to see in, the entire SUV is bulletproof with tinted windows, and the way this guy is trying to see past

my shoulders makes me wonder if he's going to insist we step out so he can search the vehicle.

"We have an appointment with Dominic Alessi," I say. "Tell him the Melnikov brothers are here."

The guard looks suspicious, but he grabs his radio and takes a few steps back so I can't hear what he's saying. He never takes his eyes off me, though. He's well-trained, I'll give him that. I can't stop the smug grin when I see the expression on his face. Based on the irritated look, I'm willing to bet he's just been told to stand down and let us through.

Hooking the radio back onto his belt, he steps closer and pushes the button to raise the gate. "Have a good day, Mr. Melnikov," he grits out, making the words sound painful. I laugh and give him a nod as I drive by.

"Fucking jackass," Roman says from beside me. I smile and drive us up another level. Roman's always been protective of us. He's a couple months older, and he's recently had a birthday, putting him at twenty-seven instead of twenty-six like the rest of us. It's just brought out all his protective instincts even more. He's been like this since we were kids.

"You're going to be hilarious when your kid starts school. I swear you're going to show up at their kindergarten and punch any kid who refuses to share a toy."

Vitaly laughs from behind me. "What if it's a little girl? Roman's going to insist on going to school with her just so he can keep all the boys away."

Roman sighs. "I can't think about that. She'll go to an all-girls school."

"Yeah, you might change your mind about that after you talk to Simona," Danil says. "Boys from the local high school were constantly finding ways to get to the girls at her school. Putting them behind a brick wall and telling the boys they're not allowed to go near them, that's just asking for it, man."

"True enough," I agree. "Forbidden fruit and all that."

"Okay," Roman says, holding up a hand in surrender. "No more talk about future daughters and the boys who will be trying to get into their pants. I can't fucking take it."

I laugh and pull into an empty parking space. "Don't worry. Your daughter is going to be surrounded by scary-looking uncles. We'll have the boys pissing their pants in fear if they ever dare try anything with her."

"Damn straight," Vitaly says. "All my future nieces are going to be completely untouchable."

Roman smiles, looking a little calmer as we all get out and take the elevator to the top floor. Matvey looks up at the security camera hidden in the corner.

“We’re being watched and probably listened to,” he says, but I can tell he doesn’t give a fuck, and unless they have Russian translators on hand, they’re not going to know what we’re saying anyway.

“I’ll try to hack into their system later,” Danil says. “God, that’ll piss them off.”

I run my hand over the stubble I should’ve shaved this morning, and my thumb brushes against my lip ring, reminding me of the day I got it. It feels like a fucking lifetime ago. We were so young then, completely unaware of the horrors that we’d have to face. I wish I could go back to that day. I’d keep Alina on a constant leash, and I’d force Matvey to never go home again. No fire, no kidnapping—our lives would be so different. But then I think about Emily and Simona and the babies they’re carrying and guilt washes over me. Roman and Danil would never have met their wives if things hadn’t played out like they did. I can’t be grateful for Alina’s abduction, but I’m happy that something good was able to come from all the heartache. The good has helped us stay sane, or as sane as we ever were.

As soon as the elevator doors open, we’re met by two men in suits. The small earpieces they’re wearing make it obvious they’re security, and I think we’re all surprised when they don’t immediately frisk us. Instead, they motion for us to step forward.

“Mr. Alessi is waiting for you. Please follow us.”

The man is professional but curt, which is fine by me. I’m not expecting to make friends here. My brothers and I follow the two men down a long hall. The Alessi crime family has control of the east side of the city, and rumor has it they have their hands in just about everything, but their main area of business is real-estate, and that’s the offices we’re currently in. Looking around, several work spaces are visible, and even with five tattooed Russians being lead through by security, no one bats an eye. They’ve been taught to be blind to certain things. That doesn’t stop one secretary from giving me a quick wink as we walk by. Vitaly lets out a soft laugh, but I ignore her. That’s not why we’re here, and I’ll be damned if I’m going to get mixed up with anyone connected to the Alessi family.

A face flashes in my mind, but I quickly push it away. The young woman I saw watching me fight last night keeps trying to creep into my

thoughts. I've seen her before. She's Sebastian's sister, the dipshit who keeps trying to beat me, and she's always kept herself hidden in the background, but not last night. Last night she'd stepped up to the fence and watched me beat the shit out of her brother with a smile playing at her full lips. Then she'd met my eyes, and I couldn't look away. There was so much in them—pain, longing, fear, desire, and I wanted to know everything she was thinking. I'd had to force myself to look away, but then she'd followed me after I left the fight, and I have no idea why, but I'm damn well going to find out.

Forcing my attention back to the present, I follow my brothers into a large conference room where Dominic is already waiting. There's an older man sitting next to him, and based on the resemblance, I'm guessing it's the mafia don himself.

"Thanks for coming in," Dominic says, motioning for us to take a seat. "This is my father, Antonio Alessi."

Antonio looks less than pleased at having five Russians sitting at his table, but he gives us a polite nod as my brothers and I sit down across from him.

"Thanks for having us," Roman says. He has a lot of experience schmoozing with the politicians. Put Roman in an expensive suit, and he could be the CEO of any company. The man's a fucking chameleon. He can hide his monster. The rest of us, not so much. Antonio sees us for what we are, and he doesn't like it.

"Is this going to be a problem?" I ask, keeping my gaze on Antonio because we might as well have everything out in the open.

"You shot my son," Antonio says. "And I don't like the Bratva." His accent is thick, but his English is perfect. "My son tells me that you can help us find who killed our Isabella." He pauses for a second, overcome by grief, but a lifetime of being in the mafia doesn't allow him to completely crumble under the weight of it. Taking a steadying breath, he looks between the five of us. "I will do whatever it takes to get these bastards. No one else knows you were the ones responsible for Dominic's injuries and the fatalities of our men. You have my word that it will stay that way. You also have my word that all our differences will be set aside until we get our revenge and part ways. Do you agree to this?"

"I kind of like this old fucker," I say in Russian.

"Balls of steel," Vitaly agrees.

Switching to English, Roman says, “My brothers and I agree. We’ll show you everything we have.”

Danil grabs his messenger bag and stands up, taking out his laptop and hooking it up so we can all see his screen on the large monitor behind him. Dominic and Antonio hang on every word out of Danil’s mouth for the next several minutes. I don’t blame them. Danil’s a fucking computer genius, and his hacking skills are unlike anything most men can comprehend. I know I don’t understand a damn thing he does. His brain just works differently, and he’s always been able to find his way into hidden places and unearth all the secrets people try so damn hard to keep buried. All that genius comes at a cost, though. It means he’s had to spend the last year and a half wading through the nastiest parts of the dark web, and it’s taken a toll on him. Simona has lessened the burden for him, but I know he’ll never be able to forget everything he’s seen while trying to find Alina.

“So the Lebedev Bratva is behind all this?” Dominic asks when Danil finishes by throwing up one of the few photos we have of Konstantin and Osip Lebedev.

“They are,” he says. “All the money goes through an off-shore account under the name of Swan Investments. This Bratva owns everything. They are in charge of everything, and they are extremely powerful and well protected.”

“Women are shipped over from various locations every couple of months,” Roman adds. “They have the auctions here that you already know about, and they use a club called the Red Viper to put some of the girls to work that don’t end up with private buyers. They have clubs like this all over the world, though. Women are constantly being taken and shipped to these various locations.”

“How will we find out who bought Isabella?” Antonio asks. “Do you really think they keep records?”

“I do,” Danil says, not a trace of doubt in his voice. “When I bought Simona, they tried to put a tracking device in her after they gave her the viper tattoo. It’s very possible they put a tracker in Isabella. Those records are located somewhere, no doubt heavily encrypted, but they’re definitely keeping records, especially of the money. They’ll know who bought her, if he’s a regular customer, how much money he usually spends with them, and if she had the tracker, there will be a record of her exact whereabouts from the time she was sold until the time her body was found. Make no mistake,

this is a business to them, and no one has a thriving business without keeping meticulous records of everything. It's the only way to know who the big spenders are, who the troublemakers are, and, most importantly, who the suspicious ones are that need to be taken out, because this is a Bratva that takes no chances. If they even suspect you aren't trustworthy, you're dead."

"The Bratva does not give second chances," I tell them.

Antonio meets my eyes. "Neither do we."

Damn, I really like this guy.

"Your turn," Matvey says.

Dominic and Antonio turn at the sound of Matvey's gravelly voice.

"We showed you everything we have," he reminds them. "Now it's your turn."

Antonio straightens his broad shoulders at Matvey's tone. I'm guessing he's in his late fifties, but he's kept himself in shape, and from the look of it, it's been a long time since anyone's spoken to him in such a dismissive tone. Most men kiss Antonio's ass, but we're not about to get down on our knees and pucker up anytime soon.

Dominic steps in, diffusing the tension as he hands Danil a flash drive. "This is what we have, but I'll warn you, it's not near as much as what you have. My focus has mainly been on Emil."

Danil takes it and immediately starts digging through the files. Emil is the man who drugged Simona and put her on the plane to be sold in America, and I know Danil can't wait to get his hands on him.

"Anything good?" Matvey asks him in Russian.

Keeping his eyes on the screen, Danil says, "Yeah. We have Emil's home address, names of his contacts, and the locations of a few other clubs around Eastern Europe where women are being trafficked."

Matvey shakes his head and looks around the table. "This isn't enough," he says in English. I can hear the frustration in his voice, and I know we're all feeling it.

"What else can we do?" Dominic asks. "We can send men to Europe. They can go to the clubs and try to gather more information."

I'm already shaking my head. "We can't afford to spook them. One wrong move, and we'll miss our chance of ever finding Alina or getting the name you want."

"We need to draw them out," Matvey says.

“Agreed,” Vitaly says, leaning forward. “It’s too risky to try and hunt them down, but we can make them come to us.”

“And how do you propose we do that?” Antonio asks.

Danil smiles and pulls up a map of the city. “How far are you willing to go to find out who killed your daughter?”

“As far as it takes,” Antonio says, and the tone of his voice makes it clear that he doesn’t have a limit on this. He’s as deeply invested in this as we are.

“Then the Alessi mafia is going to start encroaching on our territory.” Danil points to the western area of the city, the part where the Red Viper club is located and Pink, the strip club that Vitaly’s in charge of. Technically we own it, but the Barinov Bratva isn’t aware of that juicy tidbit yet. We’ve been using them, but we don’t need them anymore, and their days are numbered.

“I’m not going to send men to get slaughtered,” Dominic says. “You’ve already killed three good men of ours. I can’t let you kill another.”

“Then I suggest you hire some new recruits that you don’t give two fucks about,” Matvey says.

Dominic and Antonio think about what we’ve just said, speaking quietly to one another in rapid Italian. When they stop, I say, “David said that he allows you to come to the auctions, Dominic, because they want your money and because you’ve been content to keep your business on your side of the city. It was made clear that any trouble would be reported to the Lebedev Bratva if you crossed the line. Well, you’re about to fucking cross it. We need them to come to the city, and when they do, we’re going to be there to greet them—the Bratva that kicked the Italian mafia’s ass and helped restore order in the city. We’re going to be their new goddamn best friends.”

“So you want to make us look like cowards who ran off with our tails between our legs?” Antonio asks.

“That’s exactly what we want,” I tell him.

“It’s the only way,” Roman says.

“If it makes you feel any better, we’ll be killing all these fuckers when the time is right, so the stories of your cowardice will die with them,” Vitaly says with a grin.

“We could recruit some locals,” Dominic suggests. “Tell our men to stay away from the west side, tattoo this new group with our symbol, and

then send them in. The Russians can take them down and make it seem like we're trying to take over. They know I'm pissed about losing the auction to Danil. They'll just assume this is retaliation."

"We could pin the Barinov brothers' deaths on them," Roman says.

"They're dead?" Dominic asks.

I smile and say, "Not yet, but they will be soon enough."

"I can't fucking wait," Danil mutters in Russian. "Oleg called me again this morning because he was bored and wanted to talk."

Matvey's lip curls up in a small smile while I laugh. We'd given Oleg Barinov Danil's private number as payback for bailing on us one night. Matvey and I had been stuck with that dipshit for an entire hour. It's a miracle neither one of us lost our patience and killed him. That was a couple of months ago, and he still calls Danil every few days. It makes me laugh every time I see him answer his phone and scowl.

"Fine," Dominic says, looking between the five of us. "Let's draw the bastards out, but I want your word that you won't go after our men."

"You have it," Roman says. "Only the men you send into the west side will be killed. We'll make sure no one else comes after you. When Konstantin and Osip arrive, we'll convince them that we've already taken care of the problem. We might need to fake your deaths, but hopefully it won't come to that."

"It's a deal then," Antonio says, and then he does something I'm sure he thought he'd never do. He holds his hand out and makes a deal with a Bratva. We all shake on it like we're civilized men and not cold-blooded killers, and then Danil puts his computer away and we all stand to leave.

"We'll be in touch," Dominic says. "I'll let you know when I have the new recruits ready."

He's still favoring the shoulder I shot, but I know he's trying like hell to hide it. It had ended up being a nasty wound that had taken a long time to heal. He'd had several surgeries and is still having to do physical therapy for it. In my defense the asshole had several guns pointed at me and my brother. He's lucky I hadn't shot him in the fucking head.

"Stop smiling, fucker," he says, surprising me and making me laugh before I can stop it. Not too many men would have the nerve to call me a fucker. I really am starting to like this family. "It hurt like a son of a bitch."

"I was just thinking how fortunate you are that I didn't go for a head shot."

“Ain’t that the fucking truth,” he says with a soft laugh.

I smack his shoulder just hard enough to make him wince, but instead of getting pissed, he smiles and mutters, “Fucking Russians.”

I laugh and follow my brothers out of the conference room. The same two security guards escort us to the elevator, and as soon as the doors shut, we switch to Russian.

“How long do you think it’ll take him to be ready?” Matvey asks.

“Probably not long,” Roman says, “especially if he’s just going to grab some guys off the street and recruit them. Those poor dumb fucks aren’t going to know what the hell’s going on.”

“That’s what you get for joining the Italian mafia. It’s not like they’re signing up for the fucking Boy Scouts,” I say.

“True enough,” Roman admits.

“Look at the bright side,” Vitaly says. “They’re going to be really easy to kill.”

I laugh and bump his shoulder with mine. “Such a fucking optimist.”

“I’m a bright ray of sunshine,” he says.

“That’s eerily accurate,” Matvey says with a straight face.

Vitaly grins. “I thought so.”

We get back into the SUV, and when we get close to the gate where the same guard is standing watch, I look over at Danil. His fingers fly over his keyboard.

“You got it?”

He laughs and clicks a few more buttons. “Piece of fucking cake, brother.”

A second later, the bar in front of me lifts up, and the guard starts furiously pushing the manual override button that’s not going to do shit because Dani’s already hacked into their system. I make sure to flip him the bird as we drive by. It really is the little things in life that bring us the most joy.

“I’ll tell Timofey to spread the word among the men about what’s going on so no one actually goes after any of the Alessi family,” Roman says.

“That’s probably for the best,” I say as I pull out into the busy traffic. “I don’t think Antonio’s willing to overlook us shooting any more Italians.”

“We’ll have to plan out the attacks,” Danil says, surprising no one. If anyone’s going to have this mapped out to the smallest detail, it’s going to be him. “We can kill the Barinov brothers and pin it on the Alessi family,

but we'll need to have other coordinated attacks. I don't want to scare people away from Pink, but it wouldn't be a bad idea to involve the Red Viper."

"Attacking near their main club will definitely get Konstantin's attention," I agree.

"Yeah, but we need to do this slowly. Too much too soon will look suspicious. Dominic would never be stupid enough to do that," Roman says.

"Yeah, yeah," Matvey groans. "Everything has to be done slowly."

Danil turns to look back at him. "We're getting closer, Matvey. A year and a half ago we didn't have anything, just a hint of where we thought she might've been taken, but now we know their fucking names."

I look in the rearview mirror to see him scrubbing a scarred, tattooed hand over his face. "I know," he says in a tired voice.

We're all impatient, and the waiting has proven to be one of the hardest parts of all of this. Rescuing her and killing all the fuckers who took her will be the easy part for us, but the waiting? Goddamn, it's about to drive us all insane.

As soon as we're back at the penthouse, I pull Danil aside before he can walk off to find Simona.

"I need you to look into something for me," I tell him.

"What do you need?"

I hesitate because I'm not sure how to answer that. After a few seconds I settle on, "The guy I fought last night, his name's Sebastian Rousseau. He has a sister."

I've barely gotten the words out before Danil is smiling and letting out a soft laugh.

"It's not like that," I say, but he just gives me an annoying, placating smile that screams *Sure thing, buddy. Whatever you say.*

"It's not," I insist. "I've never even talked to her, but I saw her last night, and I think he hits her. I just want to know what you can find out about her."

He smacks my shoulder as he walks by me to go downstairs to the rooms he shares with Simona. "Give me a few minutes, and I'll send you everything I find."

"Thanks, brother," I say, hoping I don't end up regretting this. There's no reason for me to look into her, other than the fact that I still can't get her

out of my damn head. She was wearing a sweatshirt last night that looked like it was two sizes too big, and she'd had the hood pulled up, but I could've sworn her cheek was red and starting to bruise. It might've just been a trick of the light, though.

I tell myself that I only asked Danil because she followed me in her truck, but I know it's bullshit. I'm curious about her, and I want to know more. It's as simple as that. With that annoying revelation firmly in place, I grab a bottle of water and head upstairs. We converted one of the larger rooms up here into a home gym, and it's where I spend most of my time. I quickly switch my suit for a pair of workout shorts and grab a pair of gloves. I start punching and I don't stop until I hear my phone ding, letting me know that Danil's emailed me the information.

Running a towel over my sweaty body and head, I grab my phone and quickly open up the email.

"Jolene Rousseau," I whisper, looking at the driver's license photo, letting out a sigh of relief when I see that she's over eighteen. Nineteen is still too fucking young, but at least she's fucking legal. Not that it matters, I remind myself. I don't plan on ever doing anything with her. I doubt I ever see her again. Still, I can't help running my eyes over her pretty face. Dark hair, hazel eyes, and the poutiest goddamn mouth I've ever seen.

Pushing thoughts of her on her knees while wrapping those sweet lips around my cock aside, I look through the rest of the information. She lives with her dad and older brother, graduated from one of the local high schools, no job on file, no taxes filed, and no social media. Judging by what her brother does, I'm guessing she helps out and takes a small cut of his winnings. He's not a bad fighter. He wins most every fight, except for the ones where he goes up against me. He's got to be pulling in some decent money.

Disappointed that there isn't anything else, I scroll through to see Danil's message at the bottom.

Here's everything I could find on your girl. There isn't much, but from what I can see, she's single.

I shake my head at the cheeky bastard and start heading for the shower. I hadn't planned on going back to fight again tonight, but I might. I tell myself it's only because I'm feeling antsy and excited about our new arrangement with the Alessi family and not because I'm hoping to catch another glimpse of a certain someone who's way too fucking young for me.

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Chapter 3

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Jolene

“G oddammit,” I groan, looking in the mirror at the black eye that seems to darken by the second.

When I came into the kitchen this morning and saw my brother with Nikki, I thought he might be in a good mood today. His groupies don't often get invited to stay for breakfast the next morning, but it quickly became obvious that she hadn't been invited. She just hadn't left yet. By the time Sebastian was on his second cup of coffee, his patience had worn dangerously thin. While I sat in the corner, barely daring to breathe, Nikki sat giggling about some stupid video she was watching on her phone, her makeup smudged from last night, and completely oblivious to my brother's very short fuse.

As soon as his hand slammed down on the kitchen table, I knew we were both fucked. She got a quick backhand, and I got an elbow to the eye. It could've been a lot worse. I'm not sure when my life became so depressing that I now look at a black eye and think, well, it could've been worse, but here I am. I grab my makeup and try my best to cover the dark bruising and swollen skin.

I examine my face and let out a heavy sigh. There's no hiding this. I debate whether or not to stay home tonight. My brother's not fighting, so there's absolutely no reason for me to go. No reason except Lev. He'll sometimes go two nights in a row, and if he shows up, I want to be there. I'm staying in the shadows, though, damn it. I'm going back to spying on him like a pathetic perv. That's more my style, unfortunately.

Making sure my brother's already left for the clubs, I walk into the living room to check on my dad. He's sprawled out in his favorite recliner,

watching a baseball game.

“Hey, Dad,” I say, and I’m not surprised when I don’t get a response. My dad’s complete ambivalence toward me used to sting. It used to hurt like a motherfucker, but now it’s just a dull ache.

“I’m going to go out for a little bit,” I try again.

This time I get a confused grunt and a, “Why the hell are you telling me this? I’m trying to watch the game.”

It’s no wonder I’m such a weirdo. I didn’t have a chance in hell of turning into a normal human being with this dickhole raising me. And because of this fucked-up upbringing, I’m now on my way to ogle a gorgeous man from a dark corner instead of going out and meeting someone my own age like a normal nineteen-year-old.

Turning my back on my dad, I grab his truck keys and leave the house. I take my time, and because I didn’t get any supper, I stop and pick up a few tacos on the way. Outside the warehouse, I spot Lev’s motorcycle and park nearby. While I debate going in or not, I slowly eat my tacos, which just makes this whole situation seem even more sad, like I’ve hit a new level of pathetic that I’ve never quite managed to reach before. I debate that while I take another bite and sink lower in my seat.

The tacos go down easy, and before I realize it, I’ve gone through six of them and finished off the large drink I got to go with them. I’m about to just call it a night when I see a side door open right before Lev’s powerful body fills the doorway. I’d know him anywhere. I could pick him out of a line-up just from looking at the lines of his neck. I have every inch of this man memorized. Well, not every inch, unfortunately, but all the inches I can see anyway.

I duck lower and watch him get on his bike, grateful that he’s alone again tonight. This time when he drives off, I follow and I’m seeing it through to the end tonight. When Sebastian gave me my newest black eye this morning, a plan started to form. It’s insane, completely and utterly insane, but it might work. I have to at least try because life for me is never going to get any better unless I make it better myself.

Trailing his black motorcycle, I follow him down the same path he took last night. This time when he disappears down the dark alley, I climb out of my truck and follow, hoping like hell this doesn’t end with me getting mugged or worse. The guys on the corner are back again, but they don’t say anything. They just watch me walk off with smirks playing at their lips and

a few soft shakes of their heads. Yeah, I can't believe I'm being this stupid either.

When I step into the alley, I'm not sure what to expect, but watching a bunch of hookers swarm around Lev is not it. I know that much. I'm about to backtrack my ass out of here, wishing I'd never followed him because if he's seriously about to pay some women to fuck him in a dirty alley, then I sure as hell don't want to be a witness to it.

"How's Sammy doing?" I hear Lev ask. "Did you take him to that clinic I told you about?"

"I did," the woman says, taking the money Lev's handing her. "You were right. It was an ear infection, so they gave me some medicine for him. He's doing better now."

"Glad to hear it," Lev says while he passes out money to the other women like he's some sexy, morally grey Robin Hood.

I'm so stunned and confused about what the fuck is going on that I don't even have a chance to run off and hide when he turns around to face me. He runs his eyes over me, not looking the slightest bit surprised to see me standing here, and then he turns back to the women, passing out the rest of his money before telling them goodbye. My feet are glued to the dirty street when he starts walking towards me. I want to run. I *should* run, but I can't move. He keeps walking until he's standing right in front of me. I've never been this close to him, and he's so much bigger than I realized. His body is completely hiding mine from view. He towers over me, easily more than a foot taller than me, and he does not look pleased to see me.

"Why are you following me?"

"Huh?" I ask, wishing I hadn't just gorged on six tacos and a large coke, because it's all threatening to come right back up. I'm wearing the same sweatshirt as last night, the hood pulled low, and to my absolute horror, when I look down, I see a stain from the taco sauce.

Jesus Christ.

"Why are you following me?" he asks again, and all I can think about is how his voice is just as sexy as I knew it would be. It's deep in that super masculine way that makes me want to purr and rub up against him like a fucking cat in heat, and it's mixed with a sexy Russian accent that I'll never be able to get enough of.

He snaps his fingers near my face, jolting me from my thoughts and making me wish the ground would just open up and swallow me whole.

“Are you okay?”

The alley is dark, nothing but a dim streetlamp a few feet behind me, but I still feel like I’m under a glaring spotlight. I’ve never felt so stupid in my entire fucking life, which is saying something.

“I’m sorry,” I finally manage to say, my voice quiet and shaky and not at all the fearless woman I’m trying so damn hard to be.

“For what?”

“For following you.”

“Why did you follow me?”

He runs a hand over his jaw, and my eyes follow every movement he makes, and when I see the glint of his lip ring, my knees grow a little weak.

“I wanted to ask you something.”

“And you couldn’t do that back at the warehouse?”

“How’d you know I was at the warehouse?”

He gives me a small smirk. “You’re very bad at this, Jolene.”

Hearing my name come out of his beautiful mouth surprises the hell out of me, just like he knew it would. It takes a few seconds before I can form the words to ask, “How do you know my name?”

“You followed me last night.” He shrugs his broad shoulders. “I wanted to know why. Did your brother put you up to this?”

I let out a harsh laugh before I can stop it. “No, Bastian doesn’t know I’m here, and I’d like to keep it that way.”

“What did you want to ask me that was so important and secret that you needed to follow me down a dangerous alley?”

I look around, noticing that the hookers have all wandered off and that we’re now alone. If I wasn’t standing next to the best damn fighter in the city, I’d be terrified because there are a lot of dark places to hide around here and my ass could be in some serious trouble. I feel completely safe standing next to him, though.

I look up at him and force the words out. “I want you to teach me how to fight.”

I brace myself for the harsh laugh that Sebastian always gave me when I asked him, but it never comes. Lev runs a hand through his dark hair and studies me.

“Why? Are you wanting to fight for money?”

“No.”

“Then why do you want me to teach you to fight?”

I sigh and shove my hands into the pocket of my hoodie. "I just do. Will you teach me or not?"

He raises his pierced brow at my tone, and before I can think to move, he closes the distance between us and cups my face. My lips part in a gasp, partly from surprise and partly from the heat that rushes through me at having his hands on my skin. As powerful as he is, I'm expecting a rough touch, but he's downright tender as he pulls back my hood and tilts my face up to him so he can see me better. The dim streetlamp must be enough, because I see the way his jaw tightens as his eyes run over my face. Yesterday's backhand has turned into a nice shade of purple to match the coloring around my eye. Mix that with the taco sauce staining my hoodie, and I'm downright too sexy to handle.

I almost embarrass myself even more by letting out a soft moan when he very gently runs his thumb along my bruised cheek.

"He hits you."

It's not a question, so I don't bother answering. We both know the truth of it. He keeps my face in his hands for a couple more seconds before releasing me. With the heat of his touch gone, I feel cold and more alone than I want to admit.

"Follow me." He walks past me, and I quickly fall in step beside him. I have to hustle to keep up with his long strides, and when we get to my dad's truck, he holds a hand out to me. "Give me your keys."

I hand him my keys because Lev makes it impossible to ignore him when he tells you to do something. I didn't even have to think before handing them over. I watch as he walks over to the group of men leaning against the brick wall. The men straighten up when Lev approaches. Gone are the cocky smiles and smirks. They look scared to death of him. My eyes widen when he tells one of the men to drive my truck back and then gives him my address before handing him some money.

"What are you doing?" I hiss at him as soon as he turns back to me.

"It's fine. He'll make sure the truck gets back, and he's going to leave the keys under the seat for you."

"How do you know he'll really do it? My dad will kill me if his truck gets stolen." Then I add, "And I'm not crazy about some random guy knowing my address, and how the hell did you even know it?"

"I do my research. The truck will be fine, and you'll never see that guy again." When I still don't look convinced, he says, "Trust me."

I look up at him. His face is easy to see now that we're under brighter lights, and the sight of him makes my heart beat faster. I don't know this man, but for some reason I know he's telling the truth. When I give a soft nod, he motions for me to follow him to where his motorcycle is parked. I watch in silence as he grabs a spare helmet that's attached to the back and then lifts the seat to pull out a roll of black duct tape. When he starts peeling off strips and sticking it across the visor, I can't keep quiet any longer.

"Do you always carry around a roll of duct tape?"

"It comes in handy more than you'd think."

"Why are you making it so I can't see out?"

"Because I don't bring people back to my house. If I'm going to teach you, I need to do it there. We could do it at the warehouse or one of the gyms around here, but I don't want to risk Sebastian finding out." He darts his light blue eyes to mine. "That wouldn't go so well for you."

I don't argue with that, but because I don't ever know when to just shut up, I add, "You've never used duct tape on the helmet with all the other women you've had on the back of this bike."

His fingers still as he turns his head to look at me. With him slightly bent over, it puts us at a much closer level. I resist the urge to lean forward and run my tongue over his lip piercing, but just barely.

"Someone's been watching me for far longer than just a couple of nights." He turns away and goes back to taping up his helmet. I don't say anything else because it's clear I've embarrassed myself enough.

When he's finished and satisfied that I won't be able to see shit while wearing it, he hands it to me and says, "I never took any of them to my home."

I bite my lip to stop my smile, but I know he sees it because the corner of his mouth lifts up just the tiniest bit. I pull the helmet on, and I'm immediately surrounded in complete darkness, absolute pitch-black nothingness, and it's disorienting enough to make me stumble. Strong hands grip my shoulders, keeping me in place, and it fully dawns on me how much awkwardness I've just opened myself up to. All I thought about was getting him to teach me how to throw a few punches and maybe block well enough so I can stop getting my ass kicked, but I hadn't thought about the close physical contact, and I certainly hadn't thought about him taking me back to his place or riding on the back of his motorcycle with my body pressed tightly against his.

“I’m going to get on the bike, and then I’ll help you on. Okay?”

I nod my head, and when he gives the top of my helmet a soft tap, I smile in my darkened cocoon and try not to think about all the other women who have worn this helmet. It doesn’t matter, I tell myself. I’m wearing it now, and that’s really all that matters, even if it is just for tonight. It’s still my moment with him, and I’m not going to waste it thinking about other way more beautiful women that he’s spent time with. It’s damn hard not to, though, and my thoughts start to snowball out of control until I feel his hands on my hips, guiding me to the bike, and making my brain stop its psychotic ramblings.

“Grab onto me and hike your leg over.”

He doesn’t have to ask me twice. I put my hands on top of where he’s still touching me and slide my fingers up his insanely muscled forearms. He’s wearing a T-shirt, and I’m taking full advantage of it. This might very well be the only time my ass is ever in this position, and I want to take advantage of it to the fullest. I’m going to live off this memory for the rest of my damn life. My fingers run over the bare skin of his arms until I hit the fabric of his shirt. Digging my fingers into his broad shoulders, I use him for leverage and hike my leg over the bike.

“Have you ever ridden on a bike before?”

“No.” I raise my voice enough so he can hear me.

I feel him put my feet where they should be, and then he grabs my hands and wraps them around his very firm waist.

“Don’t let go,” he says, and I almost laugh at the absurdity of him having to tell me that. He’s going to have to peel me from his gorgeous body when this ride is over.

I hug him tighter when he starts the bike and the loud sound of the engine fills the space around us. He surprises me by giving my hands a soft pat before I feel the bike start to move. With my vision taken from me, all I can do is cling to him and try not to imagine a fiery death on the back of a motorcycle. I don’t know how fast he’s going, but it feels fast, really fucking fast, and I can tell we’re weaving in and out of traffic. I try very hard to not think about how close we are to all these other vehicles and about how there’s absolutely nothing in between me and them. If I fall off this damn bike, I’m dead.

Tightening my grip on him, I press the side of the helmet against his back and put all my focus on him. He must sense how scared I am because

he reaches back and gives my thigh a soft squeeze. My whole body melts against him at that sweet touch. It's so foreign to me to have someone offer me comfort when I'm scared, but it's nice. It's damn nice. Don't get used to it, I warn myself. It'll only make it harder when he says goodbye and I never see him again. Not this close anyway. I'll go back to spying on him from the shadows, watching him ride off with other women, living off the memory of this moment like the pathetic nineteen-year-old virgin I am.

I let out a heavy sigh in the helmet while I try to memorize the peaks and grooves of his hard abs without it being too obvious. There isn't an ounce of space between our bodies, and it's pure heaven for me. He probably feels like he's being mauled, but it's pure bliss from where I'm sitting.

After several minutes, the bike slows down and I feel us make a left turn before descending down a hill that pushes me even harder against him. When we straighten out again, he slows down even more before the bike comes to a stop. I'm not ready to let him go, so I don't. I keep squeezing him until he cuts the motor and there's nothing but silence and my too-heavy breathing.

I hear the soft laugh he gives before he squeezes my hands again. "We're here. You can let go now."

I don't want to, but my pride won't let me keep clinging to him, so I give him one last squeeze before slowly letting go.

"Can I take off my helmet?"

"No."

"Are you going to make me wear this the whole time?"

"No."

"You're a fount of knowledge, Lev," I say, and he surprises me by giving a deep laugh. Patting my thigh, he lets me know I should stand, so I keep my hands on him for balance and carefully step off the bike. He follows after me and then wraps an arm around my shoulders, guiding me forward. I must look like an idiot, but I don't know what the hell is in front of me, so my steps are slow and awkward until he finally gives up. Stopping me with a squeeze of my shoulder, I hear him step in front of me, and before I have time to react, his hands are grabbing onto my waist and lifting me up.

"What the hell?" I manage to say right before our chests are pressed together and his arm is under my ass.

“It’s easier this way,” he says and starts walking.

I wrap my arms and legs around him, grateful that the helmet is covering my face. If it wasn’t, I know I’d be burying my face in his neck, breathing in his scent and licking a line up his tattooed neck. And wouldn’t that be embarrassing?

Hearing him start to speak Russian surprises me, and it takes me a second to realize he’s on the phone. He keeps walking and holding me while speaking that sexy language, and it’s like my very own cocktail aphrodisiac made just for me.

I feel him put his phone in his back pocket and then I hear a dinging sound and know we’ve got to be stepping into an elevator. When I feel it start to move, I say, “You know I’m not going to break in and steal your valuables, right?”

“It’s not about that. I live here with my brothers. It’s not just about me. I’ll help you learn to fight, but I don’t take chances with my family.”

“You don’t trust me,” I say, stating the obvious. It hurts, but he did just meet me. There’s no reason he would trust me.

“I don’t trust your brother,” he says. “I don’t trust him to not get information out of you and try and come after me and my family. I can’t take that risk.”

“I would never tell him anything,” I say.

“Not by choice,” is all he says, and I can’t argue with that. If my brother found out that I know where Lev lives, then it’s possible he’d beat me to get the information, and there’s no guarantee I’d be able to endure it. Sebastian hates Lev, and if he thought he could gain the upper hand by attacking him at home, he would.

When the doors open, Lev carries me off the elevator and keeps walking. I have no idea where we’re at, but I swear I feel eyes on me. Lev says something in Russian, and when I hear another man answer him, my body stiffens. I have no idea what I’ve just been carried into, and I feel completely vulnerable with my eyesight taken away.

Lev feels me tense and pats my back. “It’s okay. You’re safe here.”

I believe him. Maybe it’s stupid, maybe I shouldn’t, but I do. I hear a couple of other men’s voices, all of them speaking Russian, and then I hear a few laughs before Lev says something else in a harder tone that only makes the laughter increase, and then we’re walking again. We go up a flight of stairs, and he doesn’t seem the slightest bit put out about the extra

weight he's holding. The way his muscles move against my body does not escape my notice. It's all I can fucking think about, and when I tighten my legs around him, he gives another soft laugh. I'm thrilled I amuse him so much.

He walks us up a few more steps, and when I hear a door shut behind us, he sets me down and gives the top of my helmet another tap.

"You can take that off now."

I ignore how badly I miss the feel of his hard body against mine and pull the helmet off my head, blinking at the bright light. Lev's standing in front of me, looking just as fucking delicious as he always does, and when I force my gaze from him and look around at the room I'm standing in, I can't help but let out a low, "Damn."

The room is massive with floor-to-ceiling windows that must give one hell of a view during the day. There are punching bags hanging from the ceiling, a few treadmills in the corner, and more weightlifting equipment than I've ever seen in one place before. God, no wonder he's so fucking ripped. It has everything anyone could possibly need.

"Damn," I say again because it bears repeating.

"Glad you like it," he says, walking past me to an area with padded mats on the floor. He waves me over to him, and it suddenly hits me that this is really happening. I'm about to have my first fighting lesson with Lev fucking Melnikov, the city's best underground fighter.

I walk over to him, fully aware that one punch from him would end my life. When I'm standing a couple feet away from him, I look up, not having the faintest idea what I should be doing.

"Hit me," he says, and I laugh before I can stop it.

He arches that pierced brow at me again. "Why is that funny?"

"I can't hit you."

"Of course you can't, but I need you to try. I want to see what I'm working with."

"You're not working with much," I mutter, and then I raise my hands and try my best to throw a punch.

He's kind enough to not outright laugh, but I see his lip twitch as my cheeks flame to life.

"Didn't your brother teach you anything?"

"Sebastian refuses to teach me how to fight. I think he's afraid that if he does, I'll fight back."

“Fucking pussy,” Lev growls and then takes a step closer. He grabs my hands and raises them up. “Hands stay up here, little one. Always guard your face.”

I smile at the nickname and curl my hands into fists, keeping them up so my face is protected.

“And don’t hold your hands like that or you’re going to break your fingers when you do land a punch.”

He carefully positions my fingers how he wants them, and then takes a step back.

“Better. Now throw another punch.”

I do, and even though it still sucks, at least I remember to keep my other hand up to guard my face. He notices and smiles.

“Your punches need some work, especially if you’re wanting to stop someone much bigger than you.”

He grabs a pair of boxing gloves and hands them to me before walking over to one of the punching bags. I put them on and follow. They’re too big, but they’ll work.

“Watch me.” He holds his hands up and throws a punch that leaves the heavy bag swinging and the chain it’s suspended from rattling. “Did you see how my body moves with the punch? I’m not just flinging my arm out there. It’s controlled, and everything’s working together. Don’t ever let your body get stiff. You have to move with it.”

He grabs the bag, stilling it and then walks behind me. Wrapping his hands around my wrists, he slowly moves my arm, pulling it back like I’m about to throw a punch. When his other hand grips my hip, I let out a surprised gasp. His fingers squeeze me tighter.

“Move with it, *malinkaya*.”

I’m barely holding my horny body together with his chest pressed against my back, his strong hands gripping me, and the heat of his breath hitting my ear, but I move with him, throwing the punch in slow motion as he teaches me what it should feel like.

“Very good,” he says, letting me go. He nods to the bag in front of me. “Now practice.”

I throw a few punches, slowly getting the hang of it. I keep going, speeding up a bit, and it doesn’t take long at all before I’m breathing heavily and sweat’s dripping down my face.

“Better,” he says, and the nod of approval he gives me has me grinning like an idiot. “If I were training you to fight, I’d make you spend a lot of time on one of those treadmills and have you lifting weights, but the most important thing for you to learn is how to protect yourself so you can get the fuck away.”

“Agreed,” I say, because I’m not looking to be the next fighter at the warehouse. I just want to land my brother on his ass and then run like the fucking wind.

“So try and take me down,” he says, motioning with his hands for me to come closer. “And don’t be afraid to fight dirty. There are no rules when it comes to protecting your ass. Do whatever the hell it takes. Go for the eyes, nose, the groin, the throat, whatever you can get at.”

I hesitate, not because I’m afraid I might actually hurt him, but what if I accidentally do?

“That’s really cute,” he says, reading my mind with a smile on his face. “There’s no way in hell you’re going to hurt me, not even accidentally, so let me have it, *malinkaya*.”

“What does that mean?”

“I’ll tell you if you land a punch.”

I raise my hands and take a step closer. Gearing up, I throw the best damn punch I have, and he swats it away like I’m an annoying mosquito.

“Again,” he says. “Don’t stop.”

I decide to just go for it, so I start punching, and I don’t stop. He swats my hands away, taking a couple of steps back as we circle along the mats. Every punch I throw, he dodges or pushes away, and it’s annoying as fuck. I let out an annoyed growl before lifting my leg and trying to kick him between the legs. He did say I should fight dirty.

He laughs and blocks the kick. “Nice,” he praises, but then he grabs me and spins me around, holding my back tightly against his chest. “A dick kick is never a bad idea, but if you miss, then it’s just going to piss the guy off more.”

I slump against him, exhausted and sweaty and hoping like hell my deodorant keeps holding out.

“Tired?” he asks, and I can hear the amusement in his voice. No doubt he can fight for hours without even needing a break, but I’m not used to this strenuous of a workout, and it’s hitting me hard.

“Yes.”

“Break free and you can have a rest.”

“Huh?”

He tightens his arms around me. “Break free, *malinkaya*.”

It’s on the tip of my tongue to ask, *Why the fuck would I ever want to do that?* I resist, though, and instead start trying to wriggle free. His grip is like iron, I struggle against him until I’m panting and pissed off, but none of it has done a damn thing to him. He’s still holding me just as tightly, not even slightly out of breath.

“How’s this working out for you?” He’s lowered his head so his mouth is close to my ear.

“Not so great,” I admit.

“Fight smarter. Don’t just flail like a fish out of water.”

He’s right. What I’m doing isn’t getting me anywhere. I pull off the gloves and toss them aside and start thinking about how I can fight dirty. That’s the only way I’m going to win a fight up against a man who’s more than twice my size. With his arms securely around my waist, I raise my own. I’m not willing to scratch at his eyes or try to rip out a piercing. I know he’d stop me before I could anyway, but I’m still unwilling to try it because the thought of even accidentally hurting him makes me feel sick. Instead, I go for the hair. He’s always kept it a tad too long, so it’s easy to fist the silky strands in my hair and pull hard.

Instead of the growl of anger I’m expecting, he lets out a sexy groan that sounds like it’s all pleasure as his hips rock against my ass, and I feel exactly how much he liked me pulling his hair.

Holy fuck!

I have zero personal experience with dicks, but there’s no way in hell what I’m feeling is normal. He feels fucking huge, and he’s hard as goddamn steel. I freeze in place, having no idea what I should do.

“Ignore it,” he growls, “and fucking fight me.”

But I don’t want to ignore it. I want more. I pull his hair again, making him hiss out a breath, and when I press my ass harder against him, he growls out a warning that I willfully ignore. I can’t help it, though. It’s like my body has a mind of its own right now, and it wants Lev. He tightens his arms around me, but I keep rubbing my ass against him while I fist his hair, lost in the moment, lost in everything that’s him. I smell his sweat mixing with his cologne, and it’s downright intoxicating, a heady mix of pure masculinity, and it makes me nearly lightheaded with need and lust and a

primal urge to mount him that I can't seem to get control of. It's like I've become more animal than human, and I can't rein it in.

His fingers slip under my sweatshirt, digging into my hips, warning me to get control, but there's no getting control of this. I'm completely fucking unhinged at the moment. When I give his hair another tug, he growls my name and it's the sexiest thing I've ever heard. I'd give anything to hear him say it while he's balls deep inside me and climaxing hard.

The feel of his calloused fingers grazing my skin pulls a whimper of pure raw need from my body, and right when I'm convinced I'm just going to combust, he spins me around and walks me backwards until I'm pressed against the wall. Grabbing both my wrists in one hand, he pins them above my head. He surprises me by resting his forehead against mine and closing his eyes as he takes a deep breath.

I don't struggle against his hand. I'm perfectly content to let him keep pinning me against the wall. While he gets himself under control, I drink in the sight of him this close. His dark lashes and tanned skin, the stubble that covers the lower half of his face, and the lips, goddamn those lips are going to be the end of me. His lip ring taunts me, and before I can think better of it, I stick my tongue out and run it along the piercing. His light blue eyes dart open, sucking the breath from my lungs as my heart races wildly in my chest. I know Lev won't hurt me, but he's a violent man, and he's a dangerous man, and the dark look he's giving me should have me meekly walking my ass right out of here, but as scared as I am, I don't want to leave. I don't want to be anywhere but right here in front of this powerful man.

"I'm beginning to think that the real reason you asked me to teach you to fight is so you can get fucked."

His words stun and sting me, and it takes me a second to answer. "What?"

"You heard me. Is this what you were really hoping for, Jolene?" he asks, spreading my legs with one of his strong thighs and pressing it against my pussy. I don't get a chance to bite back the moan of pleasure before it escapes, making me look even guiltier than I already feel.

"That's not true," I say. I mean it to come out strong, but it's just a shaky whisper, and god does that piss me off.

"So what is this? You're pissed at your brother and trying to get back at him by fucking his enemy?"

I shake my head, biting my lip and ignoring the burn in my throat and the way my eyes threaten to water.

“I would never do that,” I whisper.

“No?” he asks, running the backs of his fingers along my cheek.

The touch is sweet, gentle even, and it’s at such odds with the cruel, taunting words he’s saying. My head is a mess and my heart is in even worse condition, and when he lets go of my wrists, I act without thinking. I do everything he just taught me and punch him right in his perfectly chiseled jaw.

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Chapter 4

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Lev

I can't believe she just fucking punched me!

I'm equal parts stunned and proud, and I'm just about to give her a *good fucking girl* when I see the terror in her eyes. She's caved in on herself, her arms wrapped around her body in a defensive move to try and protect her tender core, and the sight of it fucking guts me. This isn't the stance of someone who's come here to play me, to try and use me to piss off her brother. I know this behavior. I saw it enough as a child to have it seared into my goddamn brain. This is a woman who's used to being beaten, and she's preparing herself for the punches she believes are headed her way, and I've never wanted to kick my own ass so badly in my life.

I hold up my hands, trying to look as nonthreatening as possible. It's not easy to do when I tower over her and outweigh her by a good hundred pounds. Even in the giant sweatshirt she's wearing, she still looks small, frail even, and it brings out all my protective instincts. I've been trying like hell to ignore them, but when she turns her big, hazel eyes up at me and the first tear falls, all my defenses crumble.

"Fuck," I groan, reaching out for her. She tries to move away from me, but I don't let her. I pick her up and hold her against me.

"I'm sorry I hit you." Her breath is soft and shaky, and the heat of it hitting my neck sends a shiver of pleasure down my spine.

"I'm so fucking proud of you for doing it, *malinkaya*. Don't you dare apologize. It was a good punch. Next time follow it up with a punch to the nose or a kick to the balls and then run as fast as you can, yeah?"

She sniffs and shakes her head. "Okay, but I'm not going to do that to you."

“You should after what I just said to you.”

I hesitate because I’m not sure what else to say. There’s no way for me to explain the shit going on in my head. My desire to protect her, my anger over seeing her bruises, the way she’s making my fucking cock ache with a need I’ve never felt before, and my fear that she was just using me because she wanted a quick fuck, and the knowledge that I can’t bring her into my fucked-up life right now because it’s way too dangerous—it’s too goddamn much to lay at her feet.

I settle on a simple, “I was wrong to assume you were like all the others, and I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay,” she whispers, but I can tell it’s not. All the fight went out of her as soon as I turned into an ass, and now her small body is slumped against mine, and I miss the little firecracker who reared back and punched me a few minutes ago. God, if she had any idea how fucking hard that had made me, she’d run screaming from this room.

Walking her to the fridge, I grab a bottle of water and sit in the chair in the corner, keeping her on my lap. She takes the bottle from me and drinks about half of it. I watch her slender neck, and my mind immediately turns to images of her on her knees, the feel of her throat working against my hand as she swallows my cum. The memory of her tongue running over my piercing nearly makes me groan.

I’m rock-fucking-hard, my piercings pressing against the fabric of my jeans, making me grit my teeth at the little shocks of pleasure that radiate along my shaft. Fucking hell. I put her ass on my other thigh, but there’s no way in hell she isn’t going to notice the very obvious dick print I’ve got going on. I know the exact second she does because her cheeks turn a beautiful shade of scarlet as her full lips part on a soft gasp.

I watch her, wondering what she’ll do. This is the moment where most women would reach out and grab me or straddle me or, hell, just start stripping, but Jolene fidgets with the water bottle, bites her bottom lip, and looks away. I know she wants me. When I’d been holding her on the mats, teaching her how to fight, she hadn’t been able to control herself, but she’s holding back now, making me wonder just how innocent she is.

She breaks the silence with a question. “Why were you in that alley?”

“I win a lot of money that I don’t need or want, so I give it away.”

Her hazel eyes meet mine, and she’s so close I can see the golden flecks in them. They’re eyes I could easily get lost in, and that thought alone

should have me lifting her sweet ass off me and driving her back to her house.

“So you give it to prostitutes?”

I shrug. “They need it more than I do, and I know how hard life can be. Some will probably just use it for drugs, but there are a few that are just out there because they don’t have any other options. They have kids to feed, abusive men who force them into it, lives that don’t give them very many choices.”

I reach up and push a strand of hair behind her ear, noticing the way her dark hair has a lot of red in it, making it more auburn than anything else. God, what the fuck is wrong with me? I don’t notice things like eye color shades and the subtle nuances of hair color. If I was given a line-up of women and told to pick out the ones I’ve fucked, I really doubt I’d be able to do it. I don’t pay attention. They serve a purpose, and then it’s over and forgotten. I don’t get fucking attached, and I sure as fuck don’t pick them up and hug them and then let them sit on my lap for a cuddle.

“You shouldn’t have followed me there. It’s not a safe area for you to be, especially alone and at night,” I tell her.

“I needed to talk to you, and I couldn’t do it at the warehouse and risk someone seeing it and telling my brother.”

When I run the back of one finger along her blushing cheek, she turns her eyes to meet mine. “You said you’d tell me what that word meant if I managed to land a punch.”

I smile because even though it wasn’t a punch that was ever going to knock me on my ass, it still stung, and most importantly, she’d caught me completely off guard, which is not something anyone’s been able to do since I was a kid.

“I’ve already called you it in English. It means little one.” I don’t add that it’s the first time I’ve ever used a term of endearment and that it’s not something I would ever say to anyone else.

The corner of her mouth quirks up a tiny bit, letting me know she likes the nickname. She takes another drink of water to try and hide it.

“Thanks for teaching me some stuff.” She screws the cap back on the bottle and toys with the string on her hoodie.

“You think one lesson is enough?”

“Oh, well, I hadn’t really thought much past tonight,” she admits. “I know you’re busy. I don’t want to bother you.”

“If it was a bother, then I wouldn’t have offered.”

She avoids my eyes when she says, “Well, I’d hate to disappoint your ridiculously long line of groupies.”

I arch a brow at her. “You have been watching me.”

“It’s hard to miss.”

The eye roll she gives is also hard to miss. It bothers me that she’s seen me leave with women and that it’s obviously upset her.

“I don’t care about them.” I hold out my hand. “Can I see your phone?”

She hesitates while her face turns an even darker shade, the blush creeping down her neckline and disappearing into her bulky sweatshirt.

“Why?”

“I want to put my number in it.”

“Can you just tell me it or write it down?” She’s rambling and clearly uncomfortable. “Or maybe I could just give you mine? Do you have your cell phone on you?”

Intrigued, I hold out my hand. “Can I see your phone, *malinkaya*?”

“I’d rather you didn’t,” she whispers.

I laugh, her embarrassment has me curious as hell. What the fuck is she hiding on that thing?

“I promise I won’t search through it. I just want to add my number.”

She sighs and reaches into the big pocket on the front of her sweatshirt. Pulling out her phone, she avoids my eyes as she uses her fingerprint to unlock it and hand it over to me. When I see her background photo, it all makes sense. It’s a photo of me. I’m standing by my motorcycle outside of the warehouse after one of the many fights I’ve done. I’m looking off to the side, about to put my helmet on, and she’s caught me right when it looks like I’m staring directly at her. She must’ve been hiding in the shadows again, snapping photos in secret. My own little stalker.

“I’m not like them,” she whispers as I put myself in her contacts.

When I meet her eyes and raise a brow, she adds, “Your groupies, I’m not like them. I don’t want you to see that and think that I’m like them.”

“I don’t think you’re like them.” It may have briefly crossed my mind when she was grinding her perfect ass against me, but I was wrong.

She fidgets with the water bottle and kicks her feet softy while she says, “I just like watching you.” She lets out a soft laugh. “I know it sounds fucking pathetic, but you’re so beautiful to watch. When you fight,” she sighs and a small smile plays at her lips, “it’s like magic, Lev. You’re so

graceful and focused and no one stands a damn chance against you. I've never seen anything like it."

I'm touched and stunned into silence. People look at me and they see a thug or a dangerous man they'd like to fuck. They sure as hell don't see grace and magic. I've spent my whole life fighting, and no one's ever seen any beauty in it. They see violence, brutality, an animalistic rage, but definitely not beauty. I reach out and cup her face, noticing the way she immediately leans into my touch.

"I'm no good for you, *malinkaya*." I sigh, hating that I have to say this. "I can't go into detail, but my life isn't something you need to be involved in. I can teach you to fight, and I want you to promise me that you'll call me if your brother or anyone else ever lays a hand on you again, but I can't give you anything else, no matter how badly I may want to."

It kills me to hurt her, but I can't drag her into my life. The thought of her around the Red Viper or any of these sex-trafficking assholes makes me want to go into a fucking rage, and that's not even including all the shit that's about to go down when we start a fake war to lure in the nastiest bastards of all. I can't have her anywhere near this shit. I'm nothing but trouble for her, and I'd never forgive myself if she got hurt because of me. She's too fucking innocent for me, for the life I lead, for all of this.

When she speaks, her voice is barely more than a whisper. "I never expected anything from this, Lev. I didn't even think you'd ever agree to teach me to throw a punch. I went into this with zero expectations, so you can stop worrying."

I can tell she wants to ask something, and I can't resist running my thumb over her bottom lip when I say, "What is it?"

She meets my eyes and rests a hand on my stomach. "I probably shouldn't ask this, but it'll haunt me forever if I don't. If things were different..." she doesn't finish the thought, just raises a pretty dark eyebrow at me, and the heat in her eyes is impossible to miss. I know what she's asking, and I think about lying to try and make things easier for her, but I can't do it, so I tell her the truth.

"Then I wouldn't be letting you go."

She clutches at my shirt and gives a soft nod. The pain in her eyes hurts worse than any punch I've ever taken. She doesn't even fight me on it. This is not a girl who's used to happiness and getting her way. She's used to misery and disappointment, so hearing this isn't a surprise for her, and I

fucking hate it. I'm surprised by how much it bothers me. I shouldn't care. I barely know her for fuck's sake, but I do care, and it does bother me, and there's no use denying it.

"Can I ask you something else?" she whispers, still clutching my shirt in her small hand.

"You can ask me anything you want."

She sucks in a quick breath and says, "One kiss."

"What?"

Her voice is soft and shaky when she looks up at me. "Will you give me one kiss?" When I hesitate, she rushes on breathlessly. "I know you probably think it's stupid with all the women you've had, but I just want one kiss, something I can have of you, some memory that's just mine."

I should tell her no. I should lift her up, give her cute head a soft pat and send her on her merry fucking way, but I don't. Instead, I cup her face and pull her closer. With our lips almost touching, I look into her eyes, seeing the raw desire in them, the hunger that mirrors exactly what I'm feeling.

"This is only going to make it hurt worse," I warn her.

"I don't care," she whispers. "I want you to kiss me."

If this is the only kiss I'm ever going to get, I want to savor every damn second of it. I watch as she licks her full lips, the peek of her wet tongue making my cock twitch in my pants as more pre-cum soaks my head. I'm going to end up with an embarrassing wet stain if I'm not careful. I don't understand the effect she has on me. My heart is actually fucking racing when I thread my fingers through her soft hair and pull her closer.

"I think this is going to hurt me way more than it hurts you, *malinkaya*," I whisper against her soft lips before closing the distance.

Her sweet moan as she opens her mouth for me is something I'll never forget. It's full of surprise and longing and frustration and need. She lets go of my shirt, sliding her hands up my chest until her palms rest against my neck. When I slide my tongue along hers, she moans again, bringing one palm up so it's pressed against my cheek.

She kisses me sweetly, almost hesitantly, like she's memorizing every moment of this just like I am, and when she starts to explore my lip ring, it's my turn to let out a groan. Her tongue runs over it, gently probing the metal, familiarizing herself with it and making my fucking head spin with how innocent and curious she is.

When she slides her tongue back between my lips and runs it over the roof of my mouth in the most sensual lick I've ever been given, I slide one hand under her sweatshirt, gripping her hip and pulling her tighter against me. My fingers brush bare, smooth skin, and I know I'm seconds away from losing all control. I want so much from her. I want too fucking much, and I can't have any of it.

With one last suck of her pouty bottom lip, I pull back with a groan, wishing like hell I could keep her for myself. She lets out a breathy sigh and rests her forehead against mine.

"Thank you," she whispers, and it breaks my goddamn heart. "I should go. If you want, I can call a taxi."

"Absolutely not. I'm taking you home." I cup her face, pulling back just enough so I can see her better. "Are you going to be safe there? I can take you somewhere else. I can get you a hotel room. You can stay as long as you need."

"I'll be fine," she quickly says. "I have a hard time keeping my smartass comments to myself. Sebastian doesn't always appreciate my humor. Plus, he just hates me. He always has."

"Why the hell would he hate you?"

"Because I killed our mom." She jumps from my lap like her ass is on fire and shoves her phone back in her pocket. "We should go."

I grab her hand, pulling her back to me as I stand. "What do you mean you killed your mom?"

"She died while giving birth to me." She avoids my eyes when she adds, "It was my fault, and he hates me for it."

"It wasn't your fault."

When she keeps avoiding my gaze, I hook a finger under her chin, forcing her to look at me. I don't speak until I have her full attention. "It wasn't your fault. You were a baby. I can't believe he blames you for that. What does your dad say?"

"Nothing. He barely speaks to me."

"I don't want you going back there."

She lets out a harsh laugh. "It's my home. It's the only one I know, and I'm not your problem."

"You're not a problem at all," I tell her.

"You said so yourself that nothing can happen between us, so I need to get back to my life, and you need to get back to yours, and we can

occasionally have a lesson together. That's just how it is, Lev."

She's only telling me what I just told her, but I still fucking hate it. When she tries to pull away, I let her go. She throws her empty bottle of water away and reaches for the duct-taped helmet, pulling it over her head so she can no longer see. I try to ignore how fucking cute she looks in it. I wish I could fuck her up against the wall while she wears it, nothing but darkness and the feel of my cock pounding into her sweet pussy, muffled cries of pleasure and her short legs locked around me.

Shaking my head to clear it, I walk over and pick her up. She wraps her arms and legs around me, clinging to me as I carry her back downstairs. Vitaly's watching a movie with Roman and Emily, and they all three stop to watch us.

"Fun lesson?" Vitaly asks in Russian, giving me a smirk when he sees my hand cupped under Jolene's ass.

"It went well," I tell him. "She's a quick learner."

"I bet she is," he says with a laugh.

Emily whispers something in Roman's ear before he tells me in Russian, "She said she wants to meet your girl."

I sigh and tell him, "She's not my girl, and she's not a part of any of this. I can't drag her into it."

He nods, because he gets it. He would never have dragged his wife into this. She was already involved because of her dad. Had she not been, he wouldn't have brought her in. It's too fucking dangerous. We don't take chances with those we care about, and that's why I'm carrying a girl who I've momentarily blinded. My brothers and I can take care of ourselves against Sebastian, but I won't risk my two pregnant sisters-in-law, and I won't put Jolene at risk by giving her information that could get her in trouble. Not going to fucking happen.

"I need to take her home. I'll be back soon."

While I walk her to the elevator, she rests one hand on the back of my neck, playing with the strands of hair that are always a little longer than they should be. I can never seem to keep up with haircuts.

Once we're in the elevator, she says, "I like your language. It's very pretty."

I smile even though she can't see it. "I'm glad you do."

Usually I love taking a ride on my bike, but tonight I'm in no hurry to get on it. I don't want to let her go, and I'm not sure how I'll be able to

drive away from her. When I set her down and then pull my own helmet on, she reaches out for me, climbing on behind me when she feels me sit down.

“You can’t take me home,” she says. “You have to drop me off at the convenience store on the corner before my house. Did your research tell you about that?”

I laugh at her tone. “I know where it is.”

“Okay. Nothing good will come of you dropping me off in front of my house.”

She’s right, and the last thing I want to do is make trouble for her, so I start the bike as she hugs me in the same death grip she had on me earlier. I can’t tell if it’s because she wants to be as close as possible or if it’s because she’s scared of motorcycles. My guess is it’s a combination of both. Either way, I love the feel of her clinging to me, and before I take off, I give her thigh a soft squeeze, letting her know she’s safe. She hugs me tighter and rests the side of her helmeted head against my back.

We leave the parking garage, and I ease us into the busy traffic outside our building before speeding up and passing a few cars. The night is cool, and when the brisk night air hits us as I gain speed, she tightens her thighs around me and warms her hands by slipping them under my T-shirt so we’re skin to skin.

She might be trying to keep warm, but she’s also trying to cop a feel, and it’s making it damn hard to concentrate on the road in front of me. Reaching down, I place my hand over hers, letting our fingers twine together for the briefest of moments before I pull back so I can make a turn. I resist touching her again, even though it’s all I want to do. The ride is too damn short, and when I see the small convenience store on the corner, I pull up at the curb alongside it and cut the engine.

Jolene gives me one last hug before hiking a leg over and pulling her helmet off. I keep mine on, because if I pull it off, I’m going to start kissing her, and if I start kissing her, I’m not going to be able to stop. I put my hand on the small of her back and scoot her closer.

“Promise me you’ll call if he hits you or if you need me for anything.”

“I promise,” she says, and then she places a palm on either side of my helmet and rests her forehead against the dark visor. I wrap my arms around her, and she lets me hold her for a few seconds before she sighs, kisses my helmet, and pulls away. She runs off without a backward glance, and it fucking breaks a part of me to let her go. I watch her until she hits the small,

white house at the end of the block. Her dad's truck is parked outside where I told Lenny to park it, and once she disappears inside the house, I keep watching. I don't see Sebastian's Mustang, so at least he's not there.

I watch the house for several more minutes, waiting to make sure everything's okay. I'm just about to start my bike back up when I see the light come on in the corner room right before Jolene pulls aside the curtains and looks out at me. She presses one hand against the window, watching me. I raise my hand and give her a wave. She's too far away for me to see her as clearly as I want, but I can easily imagine the small smile playing at her full lips.

While she watches me, I pull out my phone and send her a text.

I've got some things going on with my brothers that I need to take care of, but I'll text soon about our next lesson.

I watch her pull her phone out and read my message before sending her reply.

Okay. Thanks for tonight and for bringing me home.

There's a few seconds before the next message comes in.

And thanks for the kiss, Lev.

My whole body heats up at the memory of that kiss. I quickly type out a response and ignore the ache in my cock. I can't tell her what I really want to say, which is get your sweet ass back out here so I can take you back home and fuck you till the sun comes up, so I type what I should be saying instead.

Get some sleep, malinkaya, and text me if you need me. Night.

I watch her give me one last wave before shutting her curtains. I wait until she turns off her light before starting my bike and driving away. This is fucking ridiculous. I try to talk sense into myself the whole drive back, but it doesn't work, and I'm just as pissed and irritated about the whole thing when I take the elevator back up to the penthouse we all share.

The lights are off when I step off the elevator. The others must've gone off to their own rooms for the night. Not bothering to turn them on, I walk into the kitchen, surprised to see Danil standing on the other side of the island. The small light above the stove is on, giving me enough to see by, and when he scrubs a hand over his face and says a quick, "Hey," I'm too distracted with thoughts of Jolene to think anything of it or to notice the strained tone of his voice. It's not until I grab a sweet tea from the fridge and turn back around that I realize something is off. He won't meet my

eyes, his whole posture is tense, and his hands are gripping the edge of the counter in a death grip.

“Fuck me,” I groan. “You’re not alone, are you?”

He still won’t meet my eyes when he lets out a soft laugh. “Nope.”

“Jesus fucking Christ,” I growl, because tonight sucks enough ass. The last thing I want is to walk in on my brother getting a fucking blowjob in the goddamn kitchen.

He starts laughing even harder, and when I hear my sister-in-law give a very muffled “Sorry” from behind the island that’s currently hiding her from view, I throw my hand in the air and turn around. I can’t talk to her while she has my brother’s dick in her mouth. Before I walk off, I grab the pen that’s lying on the counter and add a quick rule to the list that’s hanging on the fridge.

No fucking blowjobs in the goddamn kitchen!

Danil’s still laughing when I storm up the stairs. I wouldn’t usually be this pissy about it, but I’m stretched thin tonight. My cock’s been aching for hours, I can’t stop thinking about that damn kiss and how good she’d felt in my arms, and it’s putting me in a really foul mood. I head straight for the shower, immersing myself under a blast of cold water. It doesn’t do shit to make my cock behave, so I stop torturing myself and turn the hot water on.

I’m never going to get any sleep with this erection, so I wrap my hands around my dick and give in. The metal barbells that line my shaft have me hissing out a breath when I start to stroke myself. My head is full of my *malinkaya*. I wonder what she’d think of my piercings. If she’d like them or be afraid of them. I know she’d love the way they make her feel, especially when I drag the piercing at the tip of my cock along her G-spot, making her inner walls clench and quiver around me. Just the thought of being surrounded by the tight, wet heat of her has me nearly busting a nut. Bracing my other hand on the tiled wall, I close my eyes and remember the way her tongue had slid along mine and the sexy little moans she’d made.

When I come, I come hard, spraying the fucking tile with my cum as I hiss out her name as the orgasm hits me full force, knocking the breath right out of me.

Jesus Christ!

I can’t remember the last time I came that fucking hard. I hate to say that sex has become monotonous, but it has. I always thought I’d be fine with nameless women that I never see more than once, but Jolene is

knocking all of that on its ass, because I want to see her again. I'm fucking desperate to touch her and kiss her again, and knowing I can't is making me fucking crazy.

I hurry up and clean my mess and then wash up, knowing I'm in for a shit night of sleep. I finally manage a couple of hours, but the next day proves to be just as frustrating as the previous night. I want to text her, but I don't. All I can think about is what a selfish jackass it would make me to involve her in something that could be dangerous for her. Matvey's slowly losing his goddamn mind because the woman he loves is being held prisoner by some fucking monster, and I'm sitting here wishing I could bring Jolene into this. What the fuck is wrong with me?

When I finally make it downstairs because my stomach won't let me sulk any longer, the first thing I see is the change Vitaly's made to our list of rules. Most of our rules are unwritten. The most important being we never bring home random women. If a woman steps off that elevator next to one of us, that means she's staying. It's why I'd had to keep the helmet on Jolene. The only written rule before the *no BJ* rule I wrote last night is the *no historical romances on our family movie nights* one. Vitaly has crossed out my new rule and written *vetoed—this rule is too fucking depressing*.

I can't help but laugh because he's right. A man should be allowed to get a blowjob in his own kitchen, even if we do all share it. I know I wouldn't say no to one if Jolene dropped to her knees in front of me right now.

"Glad to see you're in a better mood," Vitaly says, walking in and catching me while I'm still smiling at the thought of Jolene on her knees. "I crossed out your stupid-ass rule because I knew it must've been a horrible mistake on your part. Also, who the hell was getting a blowjob in here last night?" He laughs and grabs a drink. "It was Danil, wasn't it? They've been spending even more time than usual in their kinky, soundproofed room. Those pregnancy hormones."

"Maybe you should go knock someone up," I say, laughing at the look of horror on his face.

"Don't even fucking joke about that, brother. I've never once not worn a condom. The very idea of it fucking terrifies me. I'm thrilled to become an uncle, but that's as far as this is going. It's a shame to not pass these beautiful genes down, but it is what it is."

Danil catches the last bit of what Vitaly's said and rolls his eyes as he sets his computer down.

"Heard you had a good night last night," Vitaly teases him.

He doesn't even look slightly apologetic about me walking in on them. He just smiles even bigger and says, "I did, yes."

"How good? Do I need to get out Simona's blow-up butt cushion?"

Danil laughs. "Let me worry about my wife's ass."

Vitaly's about to say something else that will most likely land his own ass in trouble but Roman and Matvey walk in, saving him from putting his foot in his mouth. Roman's grinning and Matvey's eyes don't look nearly as dark as they usually do, so I know I'm going to like whatever Roman's about to say.

"I just talked to Dominic. He's almost finished recruiting the men we're going to be killing, and he wants to know if we're ready to start three nights from now."

"Fuck yeah, we are," Vitaly says with a smile.

I nod my agreement, more than ready to put my mind on something else and kill some fuckers.

Danil scratches at his jaw. "Yeah, we'll be ready. I think we should take out the Barinov brothers first. I'll send a message to Dominic so we can work out exactly where he should send a few men. We can kill them and then show their bodies to David to prove they're Alessi's men."

"That'll definitely light a fire under David's ass," Vitaly says with a grin. "News will spread fast."

"It better," Matvey says. "We'll put a fucking pile of dead Italians at their doorstep if that's what it takes to get the Lebedevs to visit."

We're all in agreement about that. Whatever it takes to get their attention, we're willing to do it. I throw a frozen pizza in the oven while Danil fills us in on the latest information he's uncovered. According to the dark web contacts he's made, the latest auction was in Berlin, and since Konstantin and Osip spend a lot of time there, it's safe to assume that's where they are now.

I cut the pizza while Vitaly grabs a plate, no doubt planning on helping himself to half my pizza. He starts scooping up slices, ignoring the pointed look I'm giving him.

"I can feel you glaring at me," he finally says with a laugh. "It's not going to work, though, so you can put that grumpy look away. I'm taking

half your pizza as payback for even suggesting the saddest rule I've ever seen in my life." He shakes his head and grabs a napkin. "I don't know what the fuck you were thinking, brother. I don't want to live in a world that has rule number two in it."

"He's just frustrated about the girl he brought over," Danil says. "I forgive him for his moment of complete insanity."

I mutter for them all to fuck off and take my plate to the couch, hoping to lose myself in a movie for a few hours. I'm not sure how much longer I can hold out on texting her. I promised her more lessons, and she does need to learn to defend herself, even if it is just for my own peace of mind. The thought of Sebastian laying his hands on her makes me nearly crazy with rage. I can keep my cock in check long enough to teach her a few moves, at least I think I can.

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Chapter 5

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Jolene

It's ridiculous how many times I've checked my phone over the last two days. It's taken every ounce of patience I possess and then a bunch I never even knew I had to keep from texting him. It's only my pride that's kept me in check. It's bad enough that I begged him for a kiss like a pathetic jackass. I'm not going to add being a clingy psycho to the mix.

On the plus side, Sebastian has left me alone. He's barely been at the house, and that's fine with me. I've been holed up in my room, binging Netflix and reading until I finally fall asleep somewhere close to dawn with my head full of the kiss Lev and I shared. It's truly an awesome life I'm living and not sad at all.

I'm lying on my bed, watching the night sky grow darker with each passing minute when my phone finally buzzes. My heart races at the sound. It's got to be him. My dad never texts me, and if Sebastian was pissed at me, he'd call so he could yell in my ear. I debate trying to play it cool, but fuck that shit. I grab my phone and smile when I see his name on my screen.

Free for another lesson tonight?

I quickly type out a Yeah, I'm free. What time?

Give me twenty minutes and I'll meet you where I dropped you off.

Okay, see you soon.

I hop up and run to the bathroom, taking the world's quickest shower because I want to look and smell my best for him. He's already seen me all sweaty with a stained shirt, so the bar is low. I'm pretty sure I can beat it tonight. I settle on some scented lotion instead of perfume that might be too heavy while working out and throw on just enough makeup so that I don't

look washed out. I grab my yoga pants and a sports bra, and even though I'm sticking with a hoodie, this one is red and actually fits me and, most importantly, it's stain free.

I have just enough time to run a brush through my hair and pull on my sneakers before I hear the distinct sound of a motorcycle. With a smile on my face, I grab my phone and rush out the door. I watch him park outside the convenience store while I try my best to play it cool and not sprint down the street like a lovestruck teenager. He's in jeans, black boots, and another black T-shirt. His face is completely covered by the dark helmet, and when he turns his head to look at me, my heart speeds up at the sight, because it's fucking sexy as hell. I don't realize I've stopped to just openly stare at him until he lifts a hand and curls a finger at me, beckoning me closer.

"Goddammit," I mutter to myself, dropping my head and wishing I was a little bit more like the women who follow him around. They all look so put together and effortlessly self-confident. I have no doubt that Lev probably considers me a charity project, like giving his winnings to the hookers. With that cheery thought firmly in place, I walk over to stand beside his motorcycle.

Without a word, he hands me the blacked-out helmet, but before I can put it on, he gently hooks a finger under my chin, turning my face slowly from side to side. It takes me a second to realize he's inspecting me for new bruises. Satisfied with what he sees, he pulls away but not before his fingers graze the skin of my neck. It's over in less than a second, but I feel that soft touch in every damn part of my body.

We still haven't spoken a word when I hike my leg over his bike and put my feet where they should be. Pulling the helmet on, I surround myself in darkness and press my body against his with a soft moan that I know he can't hear. It's ridiculous, but I've missed the hell out of him, and hugging him right now feels like the most right thing I've done since I last saw him.

My hands are tight against his hard abs, and before he drives off, he gives my hands a soft squeeze and then reaches back to pat my thigh. I'm completely addicted to this man, and I know I need to be worrying about protecting my heart, but I can't stop what I'm feeling, and I don't want to. The time I get to spend with him is the happiest I can ever remember being, so even if it's just for a few days, and even if that one kiss is the only one I'll ever get, I still want to enjoy every single second of this. I'll worry about my broken heart some other day. Tonight, I just want to be happy.

Lev picks up speed, racing through the streets while I cling to him and keep my eyes shut, even though I can't see a damn thing anyway. I let my world narrow down to just him and dig my fingers into his abs as I squeeze my thighs tighter against him and rest the side of my head on his back. I feel him weave the bike in and out of traffic, but I'm not even slightly scared. He's the only man on the planet who could make me feel so completely safe while in such a vulnerable position.

After several minutes, I feel us slow down before we go down that same hill that I now realize must be a ramp leading into a parking garage. When he stops the bike, I carefully step off, keeping my helmet on while I wait for him to lead me to the elevator. I hear him stand and pull his helmet off, and then a second later, he picks me up. The way he wraps his arms around me almost feels like he might've missed me, but I know that's probably just wishful thinking on my part.

Wrapping my arms and legs around him, he carries me into the elevator. He's yet to speak a word to me, and I'm hesitant to break the silence, so I don't. We ride up to whatever floor he lives on, and when the doors open, he steps us off and then says a few words in Russian before carrying me up the stairs. As soon as I hear the door shut behind us, he sets me down and gives the top of my helmet a soft tap. I pull it off and stare up at him, getting my first glimpse of him since the last time we were here. He's just as breathtaking as usual, except now I know what he tastes like, what that beautiful mouth feels like against mine, what his lip ring feels like when I run my tongue over it, and I know exactly what his sexy groans sound like when he's aroused. It changes everything, and I don't know how to pretend that it doesn't. I don't have any experience with this. I don't know how to play it off like it's nothing, when the truth is it's everything.

He steps closer and cups my cheek before leaning down to kiss my forehead. "I know, *malinkaya*," he says. "It's hard for me too."

I nod, not trusting myself to speak. He keeps his hand cupping my cheek and his head close to mine for several seconds before pulling back with a deep sigh.

"How about we work on some weights first? Build up some muscle so you can land a harder punch."

"Okay," I say, pretending like my heart didn't just break into a million pieces.

I follow him over to some sort of complicated-looking machine for master athletes. He makes some adjustments, because it's obvious I'm not going to be lifting what he's been lifting. When he shows me how to use it, I start working on some bicep curls that quickly have my muscles shaking and my arms burning. He moves me through several more circuits that hit every damn muscle in my arms, and when I'm dripping sweat and confident I won't be able to move my arms tomorrow, he squeezes my shoulder and tells me to stop.

"Time to work on blocking punches." He walks over to the mats we'd been on the other night. I'm so hot I can barely breathe, so I pull my sweatshirt off and toss it aside. The sports bra I'm wearing looks like a tank top, so I'm still mostly covered, but it's the least amount of clothing he's ever seen me in, and when his eyes run over me, the raw desire in them makes me feel like I'm naked. I've always been a bit insecure about my breast size, but I don't see any disappointment in his light blue eyes. When he pulls his own shirt off, tossing it on top of mine, I have to remind myself to breathe.

"Maybe you should put that back on," I whisper, running my eyes over the perfection that is Lev Melnikov. Every part of him is rock-hard sculpted muscle. I want to run my fingers over him, examining every inch of his magnificent body and trace the tattoos that cover him with my tongue. When my eyes drift lower, and I see the bulge in his pants, my breath hitches and I'm not sure if I should run toward him or from him. I'm in way over my head here without the faintest idea of what I should do.

"Focus, *malinkaya*." He steps closer. "Raise your hands like I taught you. Protect yourself, Jolene."

I raise my hands, and the corner of his mouth lifts up.

"Good girl."

I melt at his praise as heat flushes my cheeks and an ache hits my heart and my pussy at the same time.

"I'm going to go slow, and I want you to block every punch I throw at you."

"Okay," I whisper.

I know how fast Lev can throw a punch, and I know what he's giving me now is like slow motion for him. He comes at me, and I deflect it while keeping my other hand up to protect my face. He grins his approval and keeps going, slowly mixing things up and going a little bit faster until we

fall into a rhythm. I manage to block all of them, but the last one catches me off guard. It would've been a solid punch right to my nose, but Lev stops it at the last second, saving me from a lot of pain and blood. He drops his hands and arches a brow at me.

"Sorry," I say, feeling like my arms are about to fall off. "Can we take a short break?"

"Sure. I'll get you a water."

I watch him walk to the fridge, admiring the way his broad shoulders look without a shirt on and the trim waist that I'll never get tired of running my fingers over. My eyes keep drifting lower, and I'm still admiring his ass when he shuts the fridge and looks over his shoulder, catching me in the act of eye-fucking him.

He fights a smile as I walk over to grab the bottle of water he holds out to me. "It's not my fault," I mutter, unscrewing the cap. "And I'm sure you're used to it by now."

He shrugs those broad shoulders of his and takes a drink. I watch a water droplet spill from the bottle and land on his chest before slowly dripping down.

Holy fuck, I need to get a grip.

I hurry up and take a drink, willing the cold water to cool me down because right now I feel like I'm about to combust. We both finish our bottles and toss them in the garbage.

"All right, time for you to punch me."

I swear he's trying to wear us both out in some useless attempt to ease the sexual tension, but it's not going to work. I could be forced to run five miles, and I'd still use the last of my strength to crawl to him.

Getting into position, I start punching, and he starts effortlessly dodging and slapping my hands away. We've managed to keep our bodies off one another, but when he grabs me and puts me in another hold, I know my self-control is on very thin ice. I have no desire to break free of him, so my attempts are even more useless than usual, and he immediately notices.

"Malinkaya, you're not trying."

Not wanting to disappoint him, I struggle harder, but he just tightens his grip, refusing to let me go. I let out a frustrated groan when all my attempts lead to nothing, and then I slump against him, worn out and breathing heavily.

"I can't get free," I pant.

“I know.” He splays a large hand across my stomach and lowers his head, running his nose against my hair, breathing me in like I’m the best thing he’s ever smelled and not like I’m a big sweaty mess. “I changed my mind.”

His deep, accented voice hits me in my core, and my pussy clenches at the sound of it.

“Changed your mind about what?”

“About wanting you to break free. I’d rather keep you in my arms.” He kisses my temple, pressing me tighter against him so I can feel how hard he is. “I don’t want to let you go.”

“Then don’t,” I whisper, reaching my hands up so I can thread my fingers through his hair.

He lets out a groan when I give a soft tug, but it’s not all from desire. There’s pain mixed with it, and when he whispers against my skin, “It’s not as simple as that,” I can hear the anguish in his voice.

His lips trail down, the warmth of them hitting my temple and then my cheek, and when he gets to my ear, I moan his name as his tongue hits my skin. As soon as he hears me, he groans and spins me around, picking me up just so he can lower us both down to the mats. His body hovers over mine, making me feel so fucking tiny beneath him, and when he looks at me, my breath catches in my throat. His pupils are blown, his face tense, and the desire in his eyes stuns the hell out of me. Bracing one forearm on the mat by my head, he cups my face with his other hand, gently caressing my cheek with his thumb.

“I can’t stop thinking about you.” His voice is as soft as his touch, and it’s at such odds with his intimidating overall presence. I never would’ve believed he could be this gentle, but he’s always touched me like I’m something precious, like he’s afraid I’m going to break beneath his strong hands.

“I can’t stop thinking about you either,” I whisper.

Dark strands of his hair fall across his forehead, and when I reach up to lightly graze my fingertips along the stubbled curve of his jaw, he closes his eyes and leans into my touch, like he’s fucking craving it. I do what I’ve been dying to do ever since the first time I saw him walk into the warehouse for a fight, I touch him, exploring the beautiful face I’ll never be able to get enough of, and he lets me. He holds still while I bring my other hand up and let my fingers run over him. I feel the thick stubble before running the pad

of my thumb over his full bottom lip, taking my time when I get to the metal of his lip ring.

“How long have you had this?”

“Since I was fifteen.”

“How old are you?” I ask, making him smile.

“I’m twenty-six, almost twenty-seven.”

“I’m nineteen,” I tell him.

He gives me a wink. “I know. Way too young for me.”

When my fingers trail down his neck, tracing the tattoos that cover nearly every inch of him, he groans and brings his mouth to mine. I open for him, parting my lips so his tongue can delve inside, claiming every inch of it as his. Without thinking, I wrap my legs around his waist and snake one hand around his neck and into his soft hair. I’m addicted to his goddamn hair. I fist it and let out a moan when my tongue brushes his lip ring. God, this man is too fucking sexy. My other hand drags along his back, feeling his muscles tense beneath my fingers as my hips rock up so I can grind shamelessly against what has to be one goddamn monster of a cock that’s straining against his jeans.

He slows the kiss down, running his tongue along my bottom lip before giving it a soft suck. “I love your mouth,” he whispers. “I have fucking dreams about this pouty mouth of yours.”

“Please, Lev,” I beg, not even sure what exactly I’m begging for. I just need more. I need *him*.

“Fuck, *malinkaya*,” he groans, pulling back so he can look at me. “What all have you done, baby?”

This is the last conversation I want to be having right now, but I can tell by the look in his eyes that he’s not budging until he gets an answer.

I don’t bother lying. “Nothing.” When he raises a brow, I let out a small laugh. “You’ve met my brother. All the boys were way too scared to date me in high school. Nothing changed after I graduated. Sebastian may hate me, but that doesn’t mean he’d stand back and let someone take me out on a date. He’s always told me he’d make me regret it if I started acting like a slut and ruining our family name.” I let out a harsh laugh. “Like the Rousseau name was ever anything to brag about.”

“I really hate your brother,” Lev says while brushing a strand of hair off my forehead. His fingers caress my skin, and when I squeeze my legs around him so his cock presses harder against my pussy, he smiles and

kisses the tip of my nose before letting out a heavy sigh, and I know what's coming before he even says it.

"I can't fuck you, *malinkaya*. Not here, not like this."

His words sting. I feel the rejection in every part of my body, and it makes my throat burn and my eyes start to water. My face heats up, and I feel so fucking stupid.

"Baby," he starts to say, but I cut him off.

"Why not? Why would you have sex with all those other women but not with me? Is there something that wrong with me?"

He sees the tear that falls, and the pain in his eyes surprises me. Leaning closer, he runs his tongue along my temple, licking the salty trail. He lets out a soft, masculine groan before resting his forehead against mine.

"You have no idea how badly I want to be inside you right now. I want it more than I've ever wanted anything in my life, and the only reason why I'm not is because I care about you, and I'm not willing to rush this."

"So you won't fuck me because you care about me?" I ask. He hears the disbelief in my voice and lifts his head.

"Yes." His light blue eyes stare into mine. "If I didn't care about you, I would've already fucked and forgotten all about you. I know that makes me sound like an ass, but it's the truth. None of those women ever meant a damn thing to me, and I never once led them to believe that they did. I never made any promises, never gave my number out, never asked to see them again. That's not what I want with you."

He kisses me gently and whispers against my lips. "I want more with you, so I want to wait. I want to take this slow. I want you to get to know me, and I want to get to know you. I want to know every goddamn thing about you, and I refuse to have your first time be on the floor of my gym right before I have to take you back home."

I feel him smile before he says, "When I think you're ready, I'll fuck you, *malinkaya*."

My heart races at his words. I arch up to him and fist the silky strands of his hair. "I feel pretty damn ready right now."

He laughs, but it turns into a groan of pure need when I rock my hips up again, grinding against the hard length of him. I feel his muscles tense beneath my hand as the vein in his neck sticks out and his look turns downright feral.

"You're not going to make this easy on me, are you?"

I smile up at him. “No. I’ve thought about being beneath you for a very long time, and I never once thought it would actually happen, but now that I’m here, there’s no way in fuck I’m going to just get up and walk out that door.”

“No?” he asks. There’s a sexy grin playing at his lips. “What do you want now that you’re finally beneath me?”

When he rocks his hips, teasing me with the firm pressure of his cock against the part of my body that aches so fucking badly for him, I let out a whimper and dig my fingers into his back. The rough fabric of his jeans presses against my pussy. My yoga pants are a thin barrier, and he feels so fucking close but still way too far away.

“God, that’s fucking mean,” I whisper, making him smile even bigger. “You better make it up to me really fast.”

He nibbles on my bottom lip. “And how should I do that?”

Working his way along my jawline, he kisses and licks and nips at my skin until I’m shaking with need and panting like we just finished a workout.

“Make me come,” I beg. “Please make me come.”

He licks a slow line down my neck before nipping at the crook of my neck. “Has anyone ever done that before?”

“No. I wasn’t lying about not having done anything. You gave me my first kiss two nights ago.”

He lifts his head up in surprise. “Are you serious?”

“Yes. I told you, no one would touch me because of my brother. I was a complete outcast, and I still am one.”

“Not to me you’re not. You’re the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen, and it’s a fucking honor to be the lucky bastard who gets to be your first for so many things.”

He lowers his head to kiss my chest. “But I need you to tell me if I ever do something you don’t want or that you’re not ready for. You have to promise you’ll stop me.”

“I will,” I promise, knowing there’s no way in hell I’ll be stopping him anytime soon. I want everything with him, and I’d gladly let him fuck me right now if he’d agree to it.

He slides his hand up my thigh and over my hip until his fingers are slipping under my tank and grazing my bare skin. The sensation sends a shiver down my spine as my pussy clenches at air. I’ve never been so

fucking aroused in my life. I've made myself come before, plenty of times, but I've never shared an intimate moment with another person. I'd downplayed things with him. I was a social pariah in high school. Sebastian had made it clear that if anyone touched me, he'd kill them. It had made me so damn insecure about myself. I knew they were staying away because of the threats, or at least I hoped like hell that's what it was, but deep down, I've always wondered if there's something wrong with me, if I'm just not attractive enough to warrant any kind of attention.

With those fears firmly in place, I dig my fingers into his shoulders and whisper Lev's name. He immediately stops, freezing in place as he searches my face to make sure I'm okay.

"You want me to stop?" he asks, and there's no anger or judgement in his voice.

"No, I just want to warn you. I don't look like those other women." I do a mental checklist of all my faults from my too-small chest, my lack of any real curves, and the pussy that is most definitely not shaved. God, the women he's been with are probably all waxed and perfect and sporting double Ds. "I don't want you to be disappointed," I whisper, unable to meet his eyes.

"Does it feel like I'm disappointed?" he asks, grinding his very hard cock against me again. "I think you're beautiful, *malinkaya*, so fucking beautiful, and I'm completely obsessed with you."

"You haven't seen me naked yet."

He smiles. "Am I about to?"

I can't help but laugh at his eager tone. "I'm being serious."

"So am I. You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, and these workout clothes reveal more than you may think. I've memorized every inch of you, baby, and I love every single one of them."

"God, no wonder you get laid so much."

"Hey." He cups my face, and instead of laughing at my joke, his brow is furrowed and he's not smiling. "I've never talked like this to anyone but you, *malinkaya*, and I'm not doing it because I'm trying to get into your pants. I'm saying it because I mean it, every goddamn word of it."

I smile and pull him closer so I can kiss him. "Thank you for telling me that."

"It's the truth, baby, now stop worrying and let me make you come."

I'm not about to argue with that, so I just smile and nod my agreement. He dips his head and runs his tongue along my collarbone. "Good girl," he whispers, giving a soft laugh when my body arches up at his words.

His lips graze my skin, kissing his way down my chest. "Do you like it when I call you my good girl?"

"Yes," I whisper, running my hands through his hair.

Sliding his hand up my arm, he hooks a finger under the strap of my tank and raises his pierced brow, waiting for me to nod my head that I'm okay if he keeps going. As soon as I do, he keeps his eyes on mine and slowly pulls my sports bra down, exposing my breast to him. When he lowers his eyes and takes in the sight of me, he lets out a groan and lowers his head.

I watch as he runs his tongue over my hard nipple, and the sensation nearly does me in. As soon as he gets a taste of me, he turns ravenous. His other hand pulls the rest of my tank down so he can cup that breast while he sucks me into his mouth, gorging on my flesh and making every part of my body ache with need.

His fingers pinch one nipple while his teeth graze the other. I fist his hair and moan his name, wondering how in the hell I've managed to survive so long without him, without the feel of his mouth on me and his hard body pressed against mine. I've been living in the shadows, and he's just pulled me into the goddamn sun.

"Please," I beg, needing more, needing what only he can give me.

He rocks his hips, letting his cock run over my clit as he kisses his way to my other breast. He tongues my nipple, covering me in his spit before wrapping his lips around me. I feel the cool metal of his lip ring against my skin, and when a shiver runs through me, he groans and catches my nipple between his teeth.

"Fuck," I gasp when he bites harder and flicks his tongue against me. The mix of pleasure and pain sets my body on fire, and I lose what little restraint I have. I dig my fingers into his shoulders and fist his hair with my other hand, shamelessly rocking my hips, chasing my orgasm like a goddamn sex fiend.

"I want you to come with me," I gasp.

He lets go of my breast, his lips and my nipple glistening with his spit. "You want me to come in my pants?"

“Yes, I want us to do this together. I mean, can you?” I ask, feeling like an idiot. “Is this enough?”

He laughs and I smile at how damn adorable he looks. “Yeah, baby, I can come from this. You drive me fucking crazy.”

“Good.” I wrap my fingers in his hair and guide him back to my breast, wanting his mouth back on me.

He smiles and takes me in his mouth again, sucking and licking and biting until I’m squirming beneath him. He thrusts harder, making my eyes roll back in my head. I’d give anything to tear these clothes off, to erase the barrier between us and feel him inside me. The thought of his thick cock spreading me wide is that last little push I need.

When he feels my body tense right before I come, he lets go of my breast and brings his mouth to mine, kissing me as I come so hard it takes my breath away. I squeeze him tighter, needing him as close as possible, and when I hear his deep groans as he works his hips harder, a second orgasm hits me before I’ve even fully come down from the first. I hold him as he comes undone, feeling his body tense with his release and kissing him with everything I have. I’ve never felt so close to anyone in my life, and when our lips part, I’m gasping for air but I’m smiling so big my cheeks ache.

Lev laughs and kisses me again. “I can’t believe I just fucking did that.”

“Felt good, though, didn’t it?” I tease him.

“Fuck yeah it did.” He laughs again and gives me the sweetest smile. It’s one I’ve never seen him give to anyone else, and I love that it’s all mine. He gives me another kiss and then rolls us over so I’m laying on top of him. When I sit up, he clasps his hands behind his head and watches me, a lazy smile playing at his lips. I run my eyes over his bare chest.

“You’re too damn sexy, Lev,” I tell him, making him laugh again.

“I’m glad you think so, but you’re the sexy one, *malinkaya*.”

He hasn’t gone fully soft yet, and when I look down, I’m surprised to see a wet stain on my tank. I expected to see the evidence of what just happened on his jeans, but it’s not. It’s on my fucking shirt, which means he’s so goddamn big that the head of his cock was sticking out of his waistband.

“Holy shit,” I whisper. I’m desperate to see him, but when I start to go for the button on his jeans, he grabs my wrist to stop me. “Why can’t I see you? How big are you, Lev?”

He can't help but smile at the awe in my voice, but he doesn't let go of my wrist. "Big, *malinkaya*, but I think you should wait to see me for another night."

"Don't want to scare the virgin, huh?"

He rubs my inner wrist with the pad of his thumb. "Something like that."

I smile and lean down so I can kiss his chest. "A man of mystery," I whisper against his skin. I run my tongue over one of his defined pecs. "You have no idea how long I've wanted to do that." My breasts are still exposed, and when he feels my nipples drag along his skin as I give him another lick, he groans and fists my hair.

"Behave, *malinkaya*," he warns, but he's smiling when he says it.

"That's really hard to do when you're lying down and looking so damn sexy."

Resting my weight on top of his, I cuddle up against him and run my fingers along his jaw.

"So what happens now?" I ask. "You said you changed your mind about us, but what does that mean exactly?"

"I don't have everything figured out," he admits with a sigh, "but I know I can't stay away from you." His hand runs along my back, sliding down until he's cupping one of my ass cheeks. "I just need you to trust me while I figure all this out. I don't want to put you in danger."

"Sebastian won't find out," I quickly say.

Lev doesn't look convinced. "It's not just Sebastian. I just need you to trust me while I deal with some things."

I flatten my palm along his cheek and turn him so he's looking at me. His light blue eyes are such a contrast to his tan skin and jet-black hair.

"Swear to me this isn't just a game to you, Lev." Before he can say anything, I press my thumb against his lips. "Because if we're going to do this, then I want it to be for real. I don't want to just be another girl you have on the side. I will wait for you while you figure out whatever the hell it is you're figuring out." I smile and kiss his chin. "I would wait forever for you, but I won't do it if you can't give me the same in return. If you can't be faithful, tell me now, because my heart won't survive you breaking it."

He kisses my thumb before I pull it away so he can speak. He keeps his eyes on mine, letting me see the truth of his words.

“I would never do that to you, *malinkaya*. I know I don’t have the greatest reputation, but I’ve never cheated on anyone because I’ve never been in a relationship before. I’m not afraid of commitment, though. I’ve just never met anyone that I wanted to commit to. Not until you. I can’t stop thinking about you, and I want to see where this leads. You have my word that there won’t be any other women.” He grabs my hand and kisses the palm of it. “And if I see another man around you, I’ll fucking kill them.”

“I would never do that to you,” I tell him.

“I know, baby, but that doesn’t mean men won’t try to hit on you.”

“You can’t kill someone for hitting on me.”

He doesn’t answer, just lifts that pierced brow at me again.

I laugh and pat his chest. “No one hits on me, remember?”

“They better not.”

Cuddling up against him again, I ask him the question that’s been bugging me. “Why didn’t you go home with that one girl the other night, the one that ran up to you after you kicked Sebastian’s ass?”

“The first night you followed me?”

“Yeah.”

He doesn’t even have to think about it. “Because all I could think about was you. I looked up and saw you, and it’s the first time I almost lost focus during a fight. You were smiling softly, and you looked so damn beautiful. I couldn’t stop thinking about you, and I sure as hell didn’t want her.”

His fingers run through my hair. “I’ve seen you around before, but I never got a good look at you. You always stuck to the shadows and kept yourself hidden.”

“I don’t know why I walked up to the fence that night. I couldn’t stop myself, and I couldn’t take my eyes off you. I never get tired of watching you fight.”

He gives a soft laugh. “I guess it’s a good thing you’re not squeamish.”

I smile and kiss his chest again. I don’t want to leave him. I want to stay right here with his strong arms wrapped around me, feeling safe for the first time in my life, but I know it’s not possible, and when he lets out a sigh and cups the back of my head before kissing my forehead, I know our time is up.

“I should get you back before it gets too late. I don’t want your brother getting suspicious.”

I nod my head, even though it's the last thing I want, and then slowly peel my body off his. Before I can fix my sports bra, he sits up and pulls me back onto his lap so I'm straddling him. Lowering his head, he kisses a line along my chest, whispering so low that I can barely hear, "How am I going to let you go and just drive away?"

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Chapter 6

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Lev

I sigh against the perky tits I will never be able to get enough of and try to get my shit together. She can't just move in with me tonight. That's insane and it would probably scare the hell out of her. It's on the tip of my tongue to ask her, though. I try to reason with myself while I run my tongue over her hard nipple. It's better for her if we take this slow. I can handle all the shit with our Bratva and once we get Alina back, then I can take things to the next level with Jolene. Until then, it's safer for her if our relationship is kept hidden.

Her back arches when I graze my teeth along her tender flesh. She loves gripping my hair, and I smile against her when I feel her fingers dragging along my scalp. God, I could get lost in this woman. With one last suck, I let her go, laughing when I see the frustrated look on her beautiful face.

"You're such a tease."

That really makes me laugh. I've been called a lot of things, but a tease isn't one of them.

"Sorry, *malinkaya*, but it'll give you something to look forward to."

I stand and help her up, smiling when I see my cum stain on her shirt. I can't believe she got me to do that. I haven't dry humped since I was a young teenager, and it sure as fuck never felt like that. I watch her fix her top and then slip her hoodie back on, and when I hand her the helmet, she narrows her beautiful eyes at me.

"Seriously? I still have to wear this?"

"Just for now, baby. It's to keep you safe."

"I'm not so sure people are that curious about where the Melnikov brothers live."

I try not to laugh. “You’d be surprised.”

With a sigh, she pulls the helmet on, and she looks so goddamn cute, I can’t resist reaching out and touching her. Her body freezes when she feels my fingers at the curve of her neck. I may not have been able to hear the sigh she just gave, but I know she gave one, probably mixed with a soft moan. She likes the helmet. I knew that the first second I put it on her and she wrapped her body tightly around mine. The sexual need coming off her was palpable, just like it is now. I slide my hand down her body, drifting lower and lower until my hand is between her legs and I’m cupping her pussy in a tight, possessive grip.

“One day I’m going to fuck you while you wear that, *malinkaya*.”

I’m not at all surprised when she lets out a moan that’s loud enough for me to hear and rocks her hips against me as she grabs onto my arms. I haven’t put my shirt back on, and she takes full advantage of all the exposed skin. She drags her fingers over my chest, dipping lower to explore my abs, and when she keeps going lower, I don’t stop her. I allow her a small touch. I don’t want her getting a good enough feel to notice the piercings. I don’t want to scare her with that just yet, but she’s a curious little thing, and she’s desperate to know how big I am.

I’d readjusted my cock, so I’m back to straining against my jeans along my left thigh, and when she finds me, she lets out a breathy, “Holy shit.” She can’t see my smile, but I’m wearing a big one. Her innocence is going to be the end of me. I want to ruin her in every way imaginable. I want to corrupt this sweet girl and turn her into my needy little slut, making her beg for my cock and willing to do any damn thing to get it. I want her dirty just for me. The very idea of it has me growing even harder. I let her feel it against her shaky fingers before I step away to grab my shirt.

“You’re so mean,” she says, making me laugh as I pull my shirt on.

“I’ll make it up to you one day very soon,” I promise her with a soft tap to the top of her helmet.

Picking her up, I carry her out of the room as she wraps her arms and legs around me. I cup her ass firmly in my hands, and as soon as I’m downstairs, Vitaly sees the tight grip I have on her and gives me a smirk.

“Another good workout session, I see,” he says in Russian. “I thought I heard a few moans. You must’ve been working her really hard tonight. Poor thing’s going to be sore tomorrow.”

“Fucking hell, man,” I groan, but my irritation just makes him laugh as he walks by and notices the way Jolene’s fingers are playing with the back of my hair.

“Damn, you’re letting her touch you and this is the second time you’ve snuck her over.” He tilts his head like the smug jackass he is and cups a hand behind his ear. “Are those wedding bells I hear?” He points a finger at me. “I better be best man, damn it, and I’m not talking best man because all your brothers are your best men. I mean first in line best man. You owe me that much for falling in love and leaving me the only fucking bachelor.”

“For fuck’s sake, we’re just seeing where this goes,” I tell him.

“Oh, I know exactly where it’s going. Another pregnant sister-in-law is where this train’s headed.” He scrubs a hand over his face and looks over at the fridge. “Maybe I should put your rule back up. I’m going to be the only one not getting late-night BJ’s in the kitchen, and that’s just fucking sad.”

“I’m starting to like that you vetoed that rule,” I say with a laugh while I carry Jolene to the elevator. “I don’t know what the hell I was thinking.”

He’s still looking sad about his lack of kitchen oral sex when the doors close. Jolene keeps playing with my hair and when she slips her fingers lower, grazing them under the collar of my shirt, I give her ass a soft squeeze.

“Who were you talking to?” Her voice is muffled from the helmet, but I can hear her easily enough.

“Vitaly, one of my brothers.”

“How many do you have?”

“Four.” I squeeze her ass again. “You’ll meet them soon.”

Once we’re by my bike, I put my helmet on and sit down, guiding her behind me. She snuggles up against me, just as tightly as she always does, but this time she doesn’t hesitate to slip her hands under my shirt so we’re skin to skin. I smile and start the bike, giving her thigh a soft squeeze before driving us out of the parking garage.

I’ve never done the normal relationship thing. Hell, I’ve never even taken anyone out on a date. Despite my past, I’ve never done so many things, and I want to do them all with her. Having her on the back of my bike feels like the most natural thing in the world, and I realize how right Vitaly is. I’m not going to be able to let her go. Ever. His words should scare the hell out of me, and the fact that they not only didn’t scare me but left me smiling like an idiot instead says everything.

Jesus Christ, I think I just officially and permanently took myself off the market.

I'm still grinning beneath my helmet several minutes later when I turn down the street she lives on. I park in the shadows to give us some privacy, and as soon as I turn the bike off, I reach around and grab her, pulling her around so she's straddling me. As soon as our helmets are off, my mouth is on hers. She moans and runs her hands through my hair, rocking her hips while her tongue runs over mine. She's just as hungry for me as I am for her, and I wish I could spend the entire night just like this. Before she pulls back, she runs her tongue over my lip ring like she seems to love to do, and then gives me a big smile.

"You're a hard man to say goodbye to, Lev."

"I was just thinking the same thing about you." I run my fingers over her cheek, noticing the way the bruising has faded. "I think I should warn you that I'm going to fucking kill him for hitting you."

"It's nothing," she says. "Don't commit murder on my account."

I want to tell her that I've done it for far less and that I can't think of any reason better than her, but I save that conversation for another night, one where I don't have to say goodbye to her at the end of it.

"I'll be the judge of that," I tell her, leaning down to give her another kiss.

She cups my face and gives me the sweetest smile, and I memorize every second of this moment because it's what's going to see me through the next couple of days.

"I have something I have to do with my brothers tomorrow night and the next night I have a fight scheduled with Sebastian. Can you meet me after?"

"Yeah," she says, her smile growing even bigger.

"I have to warn you about something else."

"I already know you have a giant dick," she says, making me laugh.

"That's not what I was going to warn you about."

She steals a kiss and asks, "What's the warning?"

"I'm not sure how long I can do this," I say, all my thoughts about taking things slow flying right out the fucking window.

Her brow furrows with worry. "Do what?"

"Spend time with you and then drop you off at a house where I don't think you're safe. I'm guessing this is the last night I'll be able to manage

it.”

“What does that mean?” she whispers.

I run my thumb over her lips and kiss her forehead. “It means you can either stay with me or, if you’re not comfortable with that, I’m getting you an apartment.” I nod at the white house on the corner. “I can’t fucking do this again. I’ll worry about you every damn second, so this is my warning. If we’re going to do it, then we’re doing it. I won’t have my woman living in an unsafe place.” I shake my head at the idea of it. “Not going to fucking happen.”

A smile plays at her lips. “Your woman, huh?”

“Yes, *malinkaya*, mine and all fucking mine, so if that’s not what you want, you need to tell me right now.”

She tightens her grip on me and lifts her feet up so she can hook her legs around my waist. “It’s all I want, Lev. *You’re* all I want,” and then she kisses me and everything else fades away except the feel and taste of her.

Gripping her hips, I still her body as she desperately tries to grind against me, and when I slip a hand under her sweatshirt and hook my fingers in the waistband of her yoga pants, she lets out a whimper that breaks through every last defense I have. God, she’s already got me wrapped around her finger and owns every goddamn part of me.

“Please,” she begs against my lips, and I don’t make her beg again, even though it sounds so fucking sweet coming from her pouty lips. Now isn’t the time, though. We’re in a dark corner of the street behind the convenience store, but that doesn’t mean I’m willing to risk someone seeing my girl come undone. I need her to come, and I need her to do it quickly.

Sliding my hand further down, I slip under her panties, feeling the soft curls before I reach her soaking wet slit.

“Goddamn,” I groan while slowly sliding one finger into her tight, wet pussy.

“Lev,” she moans, clenching around my finger until my cock aches and I can barely think.

“I’ve got you, baby.” I finger her gently, making sure that every slow stroke has me hitting her swollen clit. “Come for me, *malinkaya*. Soak my fucking hand, baby, and show me who you belong to.”

She rocks her hips and bites her bottom lip, keeping her eyes locked on mine as her tight pussy sucks me in further. She’s so fucking tight that I

don't dare add another finger, and all I can think about is how good she's going to feel when I finally slide into her.

"That's my good girl," I praise when I know she's close. I cup the back of her head, holding her steady when her body tenses and she lets out another whimper. "So fucking innocent," I growl, pressing harder against her clit, "but I'm going to turn you into my little slut. You're going to be filthy just for me, *malinkaya*. Isn't that right?"

"Yes," she pants, and her voice is ragged and breathy, and when she starts to come, I lean closer and suck on her bottom lip while she clenches around me even tighter and soaks my goddamn hand. I keep working her, giving her every last drop of pleasure I can because it makes me so fucking happy to see her come undone. Her pleasure means more to me than my own, so I ignore the massive case of blue balls I have going on and kiss her while I rim her sensitive clit, feeling her body shake as the last of the orgasm runs through her.

"Oh my god," she whispers against my lips. "How the hell did you do that? I may be a virgin, but I've made myself come before, and it's never felt like that."

I smile and give her one last rub before slowly pulling my hand out of her pants. "Your body is very receptive to my touch." When she sees how wet my hand is, her eyes widen in embarrassment. "Don't you dare," I tell her, wiggling my fingers. "This is not something for you to be embarrassed about. I fucking love how wet you get for me, *malinkaya*."

With a groan, I run my tongue up my finger, getting my first taste of her, and as soon as her sweet taste hits me, I'm a fucking goner.

"Goddamn," I growl, licking my fingers clean while she watches me. When I'm satisfied, I cup her face and lean in close. "Suck my tongue, baby. Taste how fucking sweet you are."

When I stick my tongue out, she lets out a soft whimper before wrapping her lips around me and sucking me into her mouth, and it's the most erotic fucking thing I've ever experienced. She sucks and licks and moans and by the time she pulls back, I'm barely hanging on to my sanity.

"Jesus fucking Christ," I groan. "You need to get your ass inside your house, because I'll never forgive myself if I take your virginity while bent over my bike on the side of the goddamn street."

She smiles and gives me one more kiss. "Will you text me later?"

“Of course, baby, and you better call me if you need me.” She nods, but I say, “I’m serious, Jolene. If he hits you or if you think for one second he might, you call me.”

“I will. I promise.”

I help her scoot off my bike, and instead of running off, she surprises me by turning around and wrapping her arms around my neck in a hug. No one fucking hugs me, but I’m learning quickly that Jolene is unlike any woman I’ve ever met. She can come on my lap with a wild, sexy look in her eyes and then suck my tongue clean before turning around and giving me the sweetest hug while kissing my neck and telling me to drive safe.

I tell her I will and then give her ass a soft smack as she turns to walk to her house. She looks over her shoulder, giving me a smile and cute wave, before she pulls her red hood up and jogs down the street. I watch her until she goes inside, and I don’t stop watching until I can see her in her bedroom window and she sends me a text.

I’m all safe in my room and Sebastian isn’t here.

Good. I’ll text soon, baby. Get some sleep.

She waves from the window and sends me the kissy face emoji, which makes me smile as I put my helmet on. She’s still watching me, so I give her a wave and then force myself to drive away from her.

Yeah, last fucking time I’m doing this. I’m not going to get a moment of peace from now until the next time I see her, and I need to be fucking focused, now more than ever. I can’t be worrying about her stupid fucking brother putting his hands on her and dealing with the Lebedev Bratva at the same time. Something’s got to give, and that something is her living away from me. That shit’s got to change.

When I get back to the penthouse, I head to my room and take a quick shower before lying down. I text her a goodnight, smiling when she immediately texts me back.

Night, Lev. Thanks for everything tonight, and I can’t wait to see you again.

I can’t wait to see you again, malinkaya. Get some sleep, baby, and text me tomorrow so I know you’re okay.

You worry too much.

It’s never too much if it’s about you.

I had no idea you’d be such a softie, Lev.

I laugh when I read her text. *Only for you, baby. Now get some sleep.*

Night, Lev.

Night, malinkaya.

I set my phone aside and force myself to get some sleep. I'm going to need it for everything we have planned tomorrow.

Waking up and seeing a text from Jolene immediately puts a smile on my face. She sounds like everything is fine, and she said Sebastian was already gone by the time she got up. I'm anxious to see her again, and I spend the day thinking about Jolene and planning out every detail with my brothers about tonight's plans. Dominic's been in touch, and everything is ready to go. His men know to stay away, and his new recruits are blissfully ignorant of what's to come. He's sending five in tonight, so we have five men to kill plus the three Barinov brothers. I'm feeling downright giddy by the time we're ready to leave. I've got a lot of pent-up energy, and I'm more than ready to put it to good use.

"Someone's looking eager," Vitaly says with a laugh.

"I am. It's been too long since we've gotten to kill someone."

"True enough," Matvey says from beside me. He nudges Danil. "Don't worry. We'll save Oleg for you."

"Stupid fuck has no idea what's coming," Danil says. He hugs Simona and switches to English. "Don't worry, *sladkaya*, we'll be back soon."

"Are you going to be taking my pruning shears again," Emily asks, looking up at her husband.

Roman laughs and kisses her head. "You're never going to let me forget that, are you?"

She smiles and leans into his touch. "No, I don't think I will."

"I did replace them," he reminds her.

She laughs and pulls him down for a kiss. Vitaly looks at me and grins. "That was a really fun night."

"It was," I agree. We'd gotten to spend an evening torturing one of the men involved in this sex trafficking ring, and it had been a much-needed good time for all of us. Well, except for him. He died a very unhappy man.

When the elevator dings, we look over to see Sergei and Aleksandr step out. Aside from Timofey, one of our top men, these two are the only ones with keycards to our private elevator. They guard Emily and Simona anytime we all need to be away. Thanks to Danil, we have one hell of a security system, but we're not taking any chances with their pregnant wives, so bodyguards it is.

Sergei grabs the laptop from the counter, opening it so he can see the feed from the security cameras. He knows the drill. That will stay with him the whole damn night, and if anyone tries to break in, he'll call us and alert every other man in the Bratva. All of them will be sent here to protect the women and take down any threat.

While Roman and Danil say goodbye to their wives, I step back to get some space and send a quick text to Jolene.

About to go take care of something with my brothers, but I wanted you to know that I can't get the taste of your pussy out of my head or the sexy moans you make when you come so goddamn good for me. I'm thinking about you, malinkaya, and I can't wait to see you again tomorrow after the fight.

Her response is quick, and I love that she doesn't try to play games with me.

Whatever you're doing sounds mysterious, so be careful. I can't stop thinking about how damn good your lips felt on me and about your monster cock that I'm equally fascinated and terrified of.

I laugh out loud before I can stop it, and when I look up, my brothers are staring at me.

"Holy shit," Roman says with a laugh. "Is everyone else seeing what I'm seeing?"

Vitaly's grin is beyond smug. "Lev's in love. You should've seen the way he was grabbing onto that girl's ass last night. I didn't think he'd ever be able to let go."

"We want to meet her," Simona says while Emily shakes her head in agreement, both of them smiling at me. "Without the helmet."

"We can talk about it later," I say, putting my phone away. "We've got shit to do tonight."

Matvey pulls up the hood of his black sweatshirt. "Fuck yeah we do. Let's go."

We leave Emily and Simona with their two bodyguards and pile into the elevator. Danil goes over the plan one more time, even though we've all got it memorized by now, and then we get into the bulletproof SUV and head towards Pink.

"Oleg was so fucking excited when I called him today, asking if he and his brothers could meet us tonight," Danil says, smiling at the memory.

“What a sad little fucker he is,” I say, taking the silencer Roman hands me so I can screw it onto the end of my gun. It’ll suppress the sound enough so that the cops shouldn’t be called. Plus, we all have knives we can switch to if needed. I prefer to just use my hands, but it takes time beating a guy to death, and knives and guns are just easier.

I’m not at all surprised to see how packed Pink is. Ever since Vitaly took it over, there have been lines outside every damn night. We get out of the SUV and slowly make our way to the front, passing the long line and letting everyone get a good look at us so we have a shit ton of witnesses putting us here in case we need an alibi. We have enough men who would swear on their lives that we were here the whole time, but it’s always nice to have witnesses that aren’t on your payroll.

The men look at us with envy and fear, and the women that are with them may have a little bit of fear in their eyes too, but it’s mainly lust. I’ve seen that look a million times, and for once I don’t give a shit about seeing it. My eyes run over the skimpy dresses, long legs, and tits that are barely covered, and I couldn’t give the slightest fuck about any of them. My cock doesn’t even give a faint twitch. In fact, I’m enjoying not having a raging hard-on that’s driving me nearly insane with need. Jolene isn’t with me, so it’s flaccid city for me because my cock doesn’t want a damn thing to do with anyone else.

The realization should terrify me, but it doesn’t. It’s nice and comforting in a way I hadn’t been expecting. I like the idea of belonging to one woman, and when we pass the bouncers and step inside, I don’t even make an attempt to check out the strippers. There’s only one woman I want to see naked, and I can’t fucking wait to make that happen.

Making our way through the crowd, we walk over to the closest bar. Mila sees us and immediately grabs five shot glasses and a bottle of our favorite vodka. She’s a damn good bartender and Timofey’s wife, so she’s well aware of who we are and what we do. All the women who work here are Russians pretending to speak very little English. They’re all our spies, gathering information from the men they give lap dances to and passing it along to us. They’re all here by choice and none of them are forced to do anything they don’t want to do, but I have noticed that just about all of them are willing to do more for money. Not Mila, though. She’s strictly behind the bar or Timofey would go berserk and kill every customer in here.

“Thanks, Mila,” I tell her, grabbing my shot and downing it in one swallow. I motion for her to pour me another, and when I’m done with the second, I push it away and scan the room. I spot Oleg and his two brothers on the upper level. He’s in a booth in the VIP section currently getting a lap dance from two strippers. He’s got a hand on each of their asses, and when the girls start kissing, he throws his head back and laughs like he’s a fucking teenage boy who’s seeing his first porno.

“At least the fucker’s going to die happy,” Vitaly says, seeing everything I’m seeing.

“He’s going to die with a case of blue balls,” I say, “because I’m sure as fuck not going to sit here and wait for him to bust a fucking nut.”

Vitaly laughs and smacks my back. “You’re so mean.”

“Call them down,” Matvey says, tossing back his second shot and ignoring the woman who’s just walked over to stand beside him at the bar. She’s a customer, one clearly looking to get laid. All the women who work here know better than to try and come onto Matvey.

Vitaly walks off to let Oleg know we’re here. Danil and I share a look when we hear the woman say, “Can I buy you a drink?”

“No,” he says, but for some reason Matvey’s complete disinterest in every woman that isn’t Alina just makes women even more persistent. He’s sure as hell not flirty when he turns them down. He’s downright brutal when he does it. There are no smiles, or *sorry, you’re just not my type* kind of thing. They get a cold, dead stare and a *get the fuck away from me*.

This woman, like all the rest, thinks she’s going to be different, and as soon as I see her arm reach out for him, Roman shakes his head while Danil and I let out soft laughs.

“Here we go,” Danil mutters, and right before her hand can touch his forearm, he’s smacking it away with a feral look in his dark eyes.

“Don’t fucking touch me,” he growls at her, and her face pales at the harsh tone of his voice.

“Hey, what the fuck is going on?”

“Fuck,” I mutter when a man comes walking over, eyeing the woman, who I have to admit is acting a bit dramatic with her loud wail and wide eyes. Matvey did say he didn’t want a drink.

“He tried to hit me,” the woman says, turning her big blue eyes up at the man who’s come to her rescue.

“Bullshit,” I say, stepping closer. “He swatted your hand away because you tried to touch him. Save your tears for this fucking sucker,” I say, gesturing at the man who is most likely hoping he’ll at least get a blowjob out of this.

The woman looks from me to my brothers and then lets out an angry huff. “You guys are assholes.”

“Because we don’t want to fuck you?” Roman asks with a laugh.

She doesn’t care for that question and quickly turns away, seeking comfort in the guy who looks like he wants to shake our hands and thank us because he’s definitely getting laid tonight. He keeps it together, making sure to give her a sympathetic look before offering her his hand, but I can see the excited glint in his eyes.

Matvey still looks pissed, so I say, “Cheer up, brother, you’re going to be killing people soon.”

That seems to appease him a little bit, well, that and another shot that Mila pours for him, and by the time we see Vitaly coming down with the Barinov brothers, we’re ready to meet them in the back. Oleg is standing next to Vitaly, laughing and smiling like a jackass while Alexei and Ivan follow closely behind. If I was a man with any sort of morals, I’d feel bad right about now, but as I wait for my sleeping conscience to wake up, I know nothing’s going to happen. Oleg and his brothers fucked up by thinking they could handle this lifestyle, and this kind of life doesn’t allow for mistakes.

Giving Mila a nod goodbye, we follow Vitaly and the Barinovs down the hall that leads to the main office. That’s not where we’re headed, though. It’s the back exit we want, and as soon as we’re through, Timofey is waiting for us in another black SUV. Oleg turns around and when he sees Danil, his whole fucking face lights up.

“Danil!” he yells like a little girl meeting her crush for the first time. God, it’s going to break his heart when Danil shoots him in a few minutes. “Tell me more about this second location.”

“It’s pretty nice,” Danil says, “and I think it’ll be the perfect spot to open up another club.”

“Can’t wait to see it.” Oleg smiles at his brothers and then looks back at us. “It won’t take long, though, will it? Because those two girls in there are dying to fuck me, and I’d hate to disappoint them.”

I want so badly to laugh out loud, but I can't. I'm sure the strippers will be absolutely devastated that he won't be paying them to fuck him later.

"I hope you all appreciate how badly I want to laugh right now," Vitaly says in Russian.

"You and me both, brother," I say.

Vitaly smiles at Oleg while he says in Russian, "Anya said he has the smallest dick she's ever seen and that he grunts like a pig when he comes."

I bite my tongue and glare at Vitaly, warning him to shut up or I'm going to start laughing. He of course doesn't listen.

"She also said that he pays her extra to shove her finger up his ass because it's the only way he can shoot his load."

"Jesus Christ," I say, unable to stop the laugh from the truly horrific image he's just put in my head. The last thing I want to have in my head is a picture of Oleg with his fucking micro penis and a finger shoved up his ass while he grunts like a goddamn pig.

"What's so funny?" Oleg asks.

"Nothing," Roman says. "They're just talking about something that happened the other night."

We quickly get in the SUV. Even with the three bench seats we barely have enough room for all of us.

"This is a tight fucking fit," I say from the middle seat where I'm scrunched between Vitaly and Matvey.

"Unlike Oleg when he fucks," Vitaly murmurs, and I elbow him because the fucker just doesn't know how to behave, and if I start laughing again, they're going to get suspicious.

I hear Matvey let out a soft laugh, though, so I forgive Vitaly and his inability to shut the hell up. Timofey drives us deeper into the city, and soon he turns down a side street, heading to a rundown part of town that's either going to be deserted or filled with people who are probably doing the same thing we have planned. Danil's already fixed every security camera within a mile of this place so they're running the last hour of footage on a loop. In two hours it'll switch back to realtime, giving us plenty of time to do what we need to do.

"This place looks pretty shitty," Ivan says from the back.

Alexei peers out the window at the unappealing neighborhood. "Yeah, who the fuck is going to want to come here?"

“This whole area is about to be renovated,” Vitaly says, lying his ass off so smoothly there’s no way anyone will doubt him. “We have a connection on the city planning commission, and we’ll be able to swoop in and buy this property for next to nothing, and then when it’s all built up, this place will be worth ten times what we paid for it. It’s a fucking goldmine, and another strip club in the newest and hottest part of downtown, fuck man, you’re going to have more money than you’ll know what to do with.”

All three brothers are grinning when they look out the window, already imagining the money and pussy they’re going to get. Roman opens his door, and we all follow suit, climbing out so we can all get a better look at the rundown shithole around us. As soon as we’re out, Oleg, Alexei, and Ivan walk closer to the building while I reach in to grab my gun. Matvey and Danil do the same, and before the Barinovs can even turn around, we each fire a bullet into the head in front of us. It’s quick and painless. They’re dead before their bodies hit the pavement, and as soon as it’s over, we walk further down the street and slip into an abandoned building with shattered windows and a door that’s been broken in half. We wait for Alessi’s men while Timofey parks the SUV at an angle to hide the three dead bodies and act as our decoy.

Dominic said the men were told to patrol this street at midnight, so they should be here any minute. Five of them are coming, one for each of us. When I see the headlights turn down the street, adrenaline hits me, the all-too familiar rush that I love and crave. The car slows, no doubt watching Timofey, who’s pretending to have car trouble, and trying to decide how big of a threat he is.

The car slows and then stops a few feet from the parked SUV. We wait and watch all five of the men get out.

“I don’t see any guns yet,” Roman whispers.

Neither do I, but we all know they’re armed. They’re also inexperienced and stupid, which means they’ll be quick to fire and probably won’t take the time to aim if they do manage to get their hands on their guns. Learning to be calm in the middle of a shootout isn’t a skill that you’re born with. It’s one that’s built over time, and these fuckers don’t have it. I can tell by their too-cocky swagger and the over-the-top laugh they give when they walk over to Timofey. They’re trying way too hard to look tough. When you’re the meanest motherfucker around, you don’t need to try to be intimidating.

My brothers and I could teach them a few things, but instead we're going to kill them.

"Car trouble?" one of them asks Timofey as we silently leave the building, guns drawn and footsteps silent.

"Yeah, I don't know what happened." Timofey gives a small shrug. "It just died."

"That's too bad for you," one of the other men says, and as soon as he reaches a hand under his shirt to grab his gun, Roman is right there, pressing the muzzle of his gun against the back of his head.

"Don't fucking move," Roman tells him.

"Hey, man, you're fucking with the wrong men."

He's trying to sound tough, still clinging to the belief that he's untouchable, but I can hear the slight tremor in his voice.

"Not so fast," Vitaly tells one of the other men who's trying to reach for a weapon.

"We work for the Alessi family," the guy closest to me says, like we're supposed to just put our guns down at the Alessi name.

"Yeah, well, you're surrounded by the Melnikov Bratva right now, so Alessi's not going to be much help," I tell him.

"You're going to regret this," one of the others says. "They're going to fucking kill you for this."

The laugh we give isn't what they're expecting.

"Yeah, I really doubt that's going to happen," Vitaly says.

Timofey walks to the side, pulling his phone out so he can call in a team to get rid of the bodies as I look at my brothers. We may not look alike, but in this moment we're identical—soft smiles playing at our lips, and the same excited glint in our eyes. This is what we do best, and this is why we were the most feared Bratva in Moscow before we left to come here. Without the need to say it out loud, we all pull the trigger at the same time and then watch the bodies hit the ground.

We may not have needed to torture anyone, but it's fulfilling nonetheless. It's downright invigorating, and the only thing that would make this night better is if I could sink my cock into Jolene's tight pussy at the end of it.

"Fucking hell," Vitaly says with a laugh. "It just never gets old."

I smack his back with a smile and then bend down to expose the Alessi family tattoo. Danil grabs his phone and starts snapping photos that we can

send to David as proof.

“This looks way too fucking new,” I say, looking at the elaborate A tattoo on the back of his hand. I bring my fingers to the hole in the back of his head, wetting my fingertips with his blood and probably a bit of brain matter, and then smear the blood on the tattoo, trying to cover the fact that it looks like he got it a few hours ago.

“Better,” I say, leaning back so Danil can photograph it.

A truck full of our men turns down the street as Danil walks over to take photos of the Barinov brothers. Once he’s done, our men start throwing the bodies in the back of the truck before covering them with a tarp. They’ll drive them a few hours away from the city to bury them out in the country on a piece of land that Danil recently bought under a fake name.

My brothers and I get back into the SUV and head for the Red Viper. The plan is to tell David that the Barinov brothers were hit outside of Pink as they were leaving. We were outside talking to one of the bouncers when we heard the shots go off. We chased after the shooters and were able to take them out before they could escape, and then we took care of the bodies.

When we step into the seedy club, it’s an instant reminder of why I need to keep Jolene away from all this shit. All the women here are forced to be here, and the dead look in their eyes is proof of that. We’ve had to hang out in this damn club so many times, and I’ve hated every minute of it. The lap dances we couldn’t say no to because it would look too suspicious, the smell of cheap cologne, sweat, and sex that always permeates the air, making me feel like I can’t take a fucking breath, and the overall depressing nature of the place makes we wish I could burn the whole place down.

Walking past the women who quickly offer themselves to us, we head to the VIP area. David and Aaron run this place for the Lebedev Bratva, and they’re sitting in their usual booth in the corner. They come to Pink a few times a week, but most nights they’re here, watching over their sleazy empire.

“We have a problem,” Roman tells him, not bothering to beat around the bush.

David immediately sits up, pushing the blonde off his lap and waving his hand for her and all the other women to go away. Aaron looks less than thrilled when the redhead who’s riding him is forced to get off and walk away before he’s had a chance to finish.

While we sit opposite them, Danil says, "Check your messages."

David takes out his phone, pulling up the secure chat where Danil sent him all the photos.

"What the fuck am I looking at?" David asks.

Aaron leans closer to get a look. "Is that Oleg and his brothers?"

"It is," Roman says. "And the other five are the men who killed them."

"Check out the tattoo," Danil says.

"Motherfuckers," David growls, recognizing the Alessi tattoo. "Dominic did this?"

I shrug and say, "They're his men. It's possible the hit was for us and the Barinovs got in the way."

"He was pissed about Danil winning the auction," David muses, trying to put all the pieces together.

"He was," Danil agrees.

"Who the hell killed these men," Aaron asks, looking at the photo of the five men we shot.

"We did," Matvey says. They've only met Matvey once, and looking into his cold, dead eyes has the two men quickly looking anywhere but at him.

"Damn," David says. "How did it happen?"

Roman tells him the story we came up with, and then we sit back and wait. David scrubs a hand over his face and sighs.

"I'll send these to the man in charge," David says, still refusing to give us Konstantin's name and having no idea we've already figured it out. "And I'll tell him you guys took out the threat." He looks over at me before adding, "I told him about your underground fighting and how much money we've been making. He's very interested in learning more and wants me to send him a video of tomorrow's fight, so make sure you don't lose," he says with a laugh.

I meet his eyes, but I don't give him the satisfaction of a reaction. "I never fucking lose."

He holds up his hands like he's afraid he's offended me, and I stand before he can start apologizing. My brothers follow my lead, no doubt just as eager to get the fuck out of here. Tomorrow night I'm fighting Sebastian, and then after that I'm taking Jolene home, and I'm not letting her leave.

Chapter 7

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Jolene

This whole day has felt weird. Sebastian's been more wound up than usual, too antsy to sit still for even a few minutes, and he's been on his phone nonstop. Usually on the day of a fight, he'd be scarfing down protein, calling one of his many booty calls for some stress relief, and then spending the rest of the time yelling at me and watching TV. He's a creature of habit, and he's broken routine today, and I don't like it.

When I've held my tongue for as long as I can, I finally ask, "Is there something going on?"

He stops his channel surfing long enough to send me a glare. "No, and stay the fuck out of my business. All you need to do is be ready for tonight's fight. Think you can handle that, mom killer?"

I wince at the nickname he uses for me when he's in a particularly foul mood, and he grins when he sees it. Getting up, I go back to my room and grab my phone. Seeing another text from Lev puts a smile on my face, making me forget about my shitty brother.

Can't wait to see you tonight, baby.

I quickly send him a reply. *I can't wait to see you too. Sebastian is in an even worse mood than usual. He's acting weird, so be careful tonight. I feel like he's up to something.*

His response is immediate, and I can feel the rage coming through when I read his text.

Has he touched you?

No, I promise. I'm just worried. It's probably nothing.

Pack a bag, malinkaya, because you're never fucking going back there again.

I smile even bigger and tell him I will. I have my doubts about how serious he's actually being, but I start packing a bag anyway because I'll at least need something for tonight and tomorrow. I'm nervous as hell about spending the night with him, but I'm also excited and more than ready to hop into Lev's bed. I still can't believe all this is actually happening. I'm constantly having to push aside doubts and fears. Instead, I'm focusing on the way he looks at me, the gentle but possessive way he touches me, and the desire that darkens his light blue eyes every time we're together. That's what I'm trusting and holding onto.

Time slows down to a crawl, but when I finally hear my brother's Mustang peel out of the driveway, I wait a few more minutes before calling an Uber. With my backpack slung over my shoulder, I get in without so much as a backward glance, hoping like hell I never see this dump again.

The car drops me off outside the warehouse. The place is already packed, but I don't see Lev's motorcycle, so I weave my way through the crowd and head to the side my brother will be set up at. I toss my backpack in the corner so he won't see it and then find him leaning against the wall with his phone to his ear. He doesn't look happy, and as soon as he sees me, he growls out something I can't hear and then quickly hangs up.

Without a word, I pull out a protein bar from my back pocket and hand it to him. He takes it and while he chews, he looks me over. He never looks at me, not really, and it has me on edge.

"You're still fighting Lev tonight?" I ask, just for something to say to break the silence.

"Yeah, and I'm fucking beating him tonight."

Like hell you are.

I bite back the comment and force myself to nod and keep my face empty.

"I have a lot riding on this fight, and I'm going to kick his fucking ass."

"What do you mean? What do you have riding on this?"

He ignores me, tossing his wrapper at me before walking off. Once he turns the corner, I dig my phone out and text Lev.

I don't know what's going on, but my brother just said he has a lot riding on the fight tonight and he's determined to win. Be careful, Lev. Something is really off with him.

He doesn't answer me right away, so I walk over to the fence and watch the other side of the ring. I hear his motorcycle before I see it. He parks

near the front where he always does, and as soon as he stands up and takes off his helmet, the groupies come swarming. He ignores them and pulls his phone out. I see his fingers typing something out seconds before my phone buzzes.

Are you okay? Don't worry about me, baby. I can handle your brother. Come stand over here with me. Fuck him. You're leaving with me anyway.

I hear footsteps behind me and know it's Sebastian. I quickly type out *I can't. He's here. I'll walk over as soon as the fight is done.*

I have just enough time to slip my phone back in my pocket before Sebastian stands next to me. We both watch as Lev pulls off his shirt and then, ignoring the women around him, he walks over to a group of men in suits. It's the same group of men I've seen him talking to before, and even though they're all smiles, Lev just looks serious and focused. One of the men holds up his phone with a big smile and Lev nods before turning to look across the ring. Our eyes meet for the briefest of moments, but it's enough to make my heart race and my fingers tighten around the chain-link fence.

"Cocky motherfucker," my brother growls.

There were a few fights earlier, but it's obvious that this fight is the one everyone's come to see. I can feel the tension in the air, the desire to see some blood spilled, and the overall frenzied feeling that's about to take over. When Sebastian's name is announced, he gives the fence a hard enough shake to make it rattle and then walks out like he's not the man who's about to get his ass handed to him.

The crowd cheers, but when Lev's name is called, they go fucking ballistic. Lev walks out to meet my brother, looking every bit the deadly fighter he is, and all I can do is stare. I love watching him like this and seeing the calm that descends on him when everyone around him just gets louder and more out of control. He never loses it, though. Lev is always focused and two steps ahead of everyone else.

Before the fight starts, Lev gives me another quick glance. I give him a smile, letting him know I'm okay, and I see the corner of his mouth turn up the tiniest bit, and as soon as my brother looks away, he shoots me a quick wink, and my heart fucking melts for him. God, I've got it bad for this guy.

When the fight starts, he puts his attention back on my brother and waits for him to throw the first punch. Lev easily blocks it and lands a blow to Sebastian's ribs that has to hurt like hell. He manages to right himself, and I

can see the anger in his eyes when he puts everything he has into fighting Lev, trying so damn hard to get the upper hand that he was never going to get.

I hear movement behind me, but I'm too focused on the fight to turn around. Lev looks over at me, but he's not looking at me. He's looking *behind* me, and whatever he sees causes him to forget about my brother long enough for Sebastian to punch him in the face. His knuckles hit Lev's eyebrow, ripping out the piercing and splitting the skin as blood gushes from the wound. I gasp and clutch the fence tighter, unable to take my eyes off Lev. Even from here, I can see the murderous look in those light blue eyes. The crowd goes fucking crazy at the sight of Lev bleeding, and when Sebastian gets another hit, this time to the jaw, Lev finally gets his head back in the ring and starts punching back.

When I see my brother take several hard hits to the face and then another to the ribs, my chest relaxes and I can breathe again. Lev's vision is clouded by the blood, and he angrily swipes it away before delivering several rapid punches that force my brother to his knees. With one more hard punch, Sebastian falls back, sprawled out on his ass once again.

This time when Lev is declared the winner, the crowd charges into the ring. Evidently, there was even more money than usual on this fight, and they all want to congratulate the winner. Letting go of the fence, I turn around, only then remembering the footsteps and the way Lev had been staring behind me. I'd been so focused on the fight and worried about him that I hadn't taken the time to turn around. The men standing behind me are the same ones I just saw around Lev before the fight began. What the fuck do they want with me?

I take a few steps to the right. My plan is to just grab my backpack and slip into the crowd, but the man in front steps forward. He smiles like he's trying to put me at ease, but it's a creepy fucking smile and it just makes the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

"Jolene, we've heard a lot about you." He holds out his hand. "My name is David. Are you aware of the deal your brother made with me about tonight's fight?"

Panic starts to rise within me. I look back, trying like hell to see Lev, but there's way too many people in the ring, and I can't see him anywhere.

I turn back to David. "What deal?"

"Sebastian owes us a lot of money. Did you know that?"

“No,” I say. “How did that happen?”

David gives a soft laugh. “He likes to bet on himself. For some reason he always thinks he can beat Lev.”

Goddamnit, Sebastian!

My brother is a self-absorbed bastard, but this is a new low even for him.

I dread the answer, but I ask the question anyway. “What does all this have to do with me?”

“He bet everything tonight. The deal was that if he won, we’d forget about his debts to us, but if he lost, well,” he says, giving me that creepy smile again, “we get you.”

“What?” I manage to spit out before someone grabs my elbow. At first I think it’s Lev, and I sigh in relief, but when I look up, it’s Sebastian’s angry, bloody face looking down at me.

“Give me a minute with her, and then she’s yours,” he tells David before dragging me to a side door and out to the back of the warehouse. Before I can even ask anything, he shoves me against the wall and lowers his face close to mine.

“Are you fucking him?”

I’ve never heard him this angry before, and it scares the hell out of me.

“What? Who?”

“Don’t fucking lie to me!” he yells at me, smacking his fist against the wall by my head. “I saw him look at you. Lev never loses focus during a fight, but he did because he was looking at you. Are you fucking him?”

“No, I swear I’m not,” I quickly say.

“You stupid fucking bitch, you better not be lying to me, because if you’re not a virgin, then you’re fucking worthless to me right now.”

“I am,” I yell back. “What the hell is going on? Who are those men? They said you made a deal with them about me.”

Sebastian smiles, and it sends a spike of fear straight through me. “I sold you. For once in your goddamn life, you’re going to be useful to me.”

“You *sold* me?” I ask, too shocked to keep the horror from my voice. I shove my hands against him, never wanting to hurt someone so badly in my life. “You can’t fucking sell me!” I clench my hand into a tight fist just like Lev taught me and as soon as he backs up enough, I swing, hitting him right in his already bruised jaw. He growls in anger and pain, and I have just enough time to skirt by him before I take off running, but I don’t get far. I

should've known better than to punch an already half-crazed, furious man who hates my guts. I haven't had near enough lessons for this.

His hands grab me by the waist before spinning me around. The first punch feels like a goddamn sledgehammer hitting my skull. He's never hit me this hard before. I let out a pained scream, but it doesn't make him stop. If anything, it just spurs him on. He keeps punching, and each hit hurts worse than the last. I try to keep my hands up to protect my face, anything to stop the fists from making contact, but nothing seems to work.

"You deserve everything you're about to get," he hollers as he hits my lip, busting it with a sharp flash of pain and then there's nothing but the feel of warm blood on my face, coming from so many different places at once.

I fall to the ground, curling into a ball, and when he kicks my back, I'm convinced he's going to kill me. It's hard to think about anything but the searing pain that's consuming every single part of me, but I hold on to the memory of Lev. He's the only good thing to ever happen to me, and I'll be damned if I'm going to let my brother cheat me out of this one happy thought before I die. I hold on to the memory of him, thankful for the short amount of time I got to spend with him. I cling to the image of him as my vision starts to darken at the edges.

Right before I pass out, I hear tires crunching on gravel. I fight to stay conscious, hoping like hell it's Lev, but the voice I hear isn't the deep accented one I so desperately want to hear. It's David's, and the sound of it pulls another pained groan from me.

"What the fuck, Sebastian?" he yells at him, pulling him back so he's forced to stop kicking me. "This wasn't the fucking deal we had."

"She's a virgin," he says. "Who cares what she looks like? She'll heal soon enough."

"I need to sell her now, dipshit. It's going to be hard to get a good price for her if she's covered in blood and her face is so swollen she can't suck dick!"

"Whatever," my brother mutters. "Just take her. I never want to fucking see her again."

I can't move. I can barely breathe, and when I feel a pair of arms come under me, I cry out in pain as I'm lifted from the ground. The man holding me isn't David, just one of the men who was standing with him, and he keeps me held against him as he gets in the backseat of a car. He doesn't hold me like Lev does, like I'm something precious, something worth

taking care of and keeping safe. He holds me like it's his job, like he's being forced to, and when he talks, he proves me right.

"You're ruining my suit," he mutters, looking down at the blood he's now covered in.

I'm in too much pain to offer a smartass comeback, so I just give a soft *I don't give a fuck* sigh and rest my bloody head on his shoulder, making sure to angle my face so my bloody mouth hits his crisp, white dress shirt. It's childish, I know, but it does make me feel slightly better.

"Bitch," he spits out and then digs his fingers into my side, hitting one of the many spots Sebastian kicked me and making me nearly scream from the pain.

This time when my vision darkens, I don't fight it. I let it take me under, wanting to escape the pain and fear for just a few minutes. The rough way I'm jostled when the man gets out of the car is enough to wake me back up. He's not even trying to make this less painful for me, and I'm pretty sure he's going out of his way to make it hurt as much as possible.

He carries me through the back entrance of a brick building that I don't recognize. Loud music greets us, making my head hurt even worse than it was just a few seconds ago. It's a sultry beat, making me think of strip clubs I've seen in movies, and when I'm carried down a dark hallway, I look over the man's shoulder and catch sight of a woman grinding against a stripper pole.

The reality of my situation hits me full force. My brother fucking sold me to these assholes, and Lev will never be able to find me. I'll never see him again, and I'm going to spend the rest of what will probably be a very short life stripping for these perverts, and that's if I'm lucky. My guess is they have a whole lot more planned than just watching me take my clothes off.

I'm taken to a small office and tossed roughly into a chair. A pained groan escapes from my bloody lips before I can stop it. Who am I kidding? There's no stopping it. I'm in so much pain I can barely move, and I don't see that changing anytime soon.

"Aaron, don't be so fucking rough with her. The buyer we have lined up is going to be pissed off enough about this," David says.

I don't bother glaring at Aaron. With one of my eyes swollen shut, I'm guessing it wouldn't come off as fierce anyway.

"I can pay you," I say, speaking slowly around my cut lip.

David laughs. “You have a million dollars lying around?” When he sees the way my good eye widens at the number, he says, “Yeah, I didn’t think so.”

As the adrenaline starts to fade, the pain hits me hard, and soon my whole body is shaking. The pain is all-consuming, but it’s nothing compared to the terror that’s starting to creep in. I’m going to be sold, raped, and probably beaten. The thought of never seeing Lev again, of never feeling his gentle touch or seeing the sweet smile he saves just for me makes me feel like I can’t breathe.

When I hear his voice, I start to cry, knowing I’m imagining it, but when it keeps getting louder, a tiny flicker of hope latches onto me and refuses to let go. The door opens, and Lev’s powerful body fills the doorway. I sob in relief, wanting to get up and run to him, but there’s something in his eyes that keeps my ass glued to the chair. He looks fucking feral, like he’s seconds away from killing everyone in this room, especially with blood still dripping from the gash on his eyebrow, but when his blue eyes meet mine, I can tell he’s pleading with me to keep my mouth shut, and so I do. I don’t know what in the hell is going on, but I’m long past words. I’m fully in the *scared to death* phase of the evening.

“Lev, what are you doing here?” David asks him. He doesn’t sound mad, just slightly surprised to see him. “I mean, besides bleeding all over my goddamn floor.”

“I want her,” he says, nodding towards me. Another man walks in to stand beside Lev. He’s wearing jeans and his eyes are as dark as the black hoodie he’s wearing, and he looks just as pissed as Lev.

“I already have a buyer lined up,” David says, sitting on the edge of his desk. “A million dollars for her sweet ass. He’ll be here in the morning to collect her.”

“I’ll pay double,” Lev says.

My heart starts to break when I realize that Lev isn’t surprised by the club, and he doesn’t seem all that surprised that I’m being sold.

David stares at him, that same creepy smile playing at his lips. He stands and walks over to me, fisting my hair in a rough grip that pulls a yelp from me. He watches Lev, studying his reaction, but the man is completely unreadable. His face is a stone mask that isn’t revealing shit. He could be watching the fucking weather channel right now for all the emotion he’s showing.

“Why do you want her? Why pay two million for a woman who looks like this?”

If I could work up the energy, I’d be insulted.

Lev’s harsh laugh is the last thing I’m expecting, and it hurts. It hurts way worse than anything my brother did, because I don’t know what’s going on right now, and I don’t understand how Lev is involved in all this.

“She’s Sebastian’s sister, David. That little fucker has been a pain in my ass since I started fighting at the warehouse. Do you have any idea how pissed he’s going to be when I buy and fuck his little sister?”

“I don’t know,” David says, tightening his grip on my hair. “Look what he did to her. He doesn’t seem to like her all that much.”

“He’ll care because it’s going to humiliate him, and he’ll care because I’m going to set up another fight with him, and this one is going to be to the death. I’m going to fuck his little sister, humiliate him in front of everyone, and then I’m going to kill him and make you even richer than you already are.”

David perks up at that, but Lev keeps going.

“The warehouse holds a lot of fights, but none of them are to the death. A few men have died accidentally or because someone got a little overzealous, but there’s never been one announced beforehand. It’s going to bring in a big crowd. Charge a fee and start taking bids, David.”

“God, that’s not a bad idea,” Aaron says. “You saw how riled up the crowd got tonight when Sebastian drew blood. They’re going to love this.”

“Fine,” David says. He lets go of my hair with a sigh. “I have someone else I can sell in her place, but I want the money now, and lucky for you, Ernst is here tonight. Go get him, Aaron.”

“Can’t she get it some other time?” Lev asks, and I haven’t the slightest fuck what they’re talking about.

“No,” David says, and his tone makes it clear he’s not budging on this one. “You don’t walk out of this club with her until she has the tattoo and I have two million in my fucking account.”

Lev grabs his phone, swiping across the screen quickly. A few seconds later, he says, “Done,” and pockets his phone.

David walks over to the laptop on his desk, and when he sees that the money’s been transferred, he smiles and looks at the man standing next to Lev. “Let me know when you’re ready to buy a woman, Matvey. You and Vitaly are the only two Melnikov brothers without a pet.”

I look up in surprise. This is Lev's brother? And they fucking buy women?

"I'm very picky," Matvey says. His gravelly voice is harsh and doesn't do a damn thing to put me at ease.

Before David can say anything else, Aaron comes back with a man who's carrying a black case. His nose is fucked-up, like it didn't heal properly from a break. His small eyes take me in, but he doesn't seem the slightest bit upset at seeing a woman who's clearly had the shit beat out of her.

While he opens the case and starts getting the tattoo equipment ready, I try not to fall out of my seat when a wave of dizziness hits me. Lev notices and quickly closes the distance. Without a word, he lifts me up and then sits in the chair, putting me on his lap. His hands are so fucking gentle, and it makes me start crying, even though I'm trying like hell to fight it.

"It's just a fucking tattoo," Aaron mutters, acting like I'm being a typical overly dramatic female before he and David leave the room, shutting the door behind them.

Lev's thumb grazes my forearm when he grabs onto me and holds my arm out to Ernst. There's so much I want to say and ask, but I can't do that while we're here, so I keep my arm held out for Ernst to do whatever the fuck tattoo he needs to put on me while I lean my head against Lev's shoulder because I no longer have the strength to hold it up. The buzz of the tattoo gun startles me, but when he presses it to my skin, it's not nearly as painful as I thought it would be, or maybe I'm just in too much pain to notice it. I'm not sure.

"Did you hit your head?" Lev asks, his voice is low, but I know Ernst can hear every word we say.

"I think so," I say, trying to remember. It's hazy, though, and all I can really remember is pain and feeling like I was being hit everywhere at once.

"Don't fall asleep. You could have a concussion."

"Okay," I whisper, knowing it'll be a miracle if I can stay awake. I turn my head just enough so my lips are close to his ear. "Thank you." I whisper it so softly that I'm not sure he can hear, but then he gives my thigh a gentle squeeze to let me know he has. I don't know what he has to do with all this, but I do know I'd still rather be in Lev's lap than anywhere else. He just paid two million dollars to keep me from being sold to who the hell knows

what kind of monster, and he's holding me so fucking gently, even though the rage rolling off of him right now is so fierce I can feel it.

Matvey sits down in a chair in the corner and starts texting someone while Lev holds me and Ernst works on my tattoo. I can't tell what it is yet. It looks like a snake, and I'm not crazy about that. I don't really like snakes, and it's not a tattoo I would ever pick for myself, but at least the design itself looks good and I won't be walking around with a tattoo that looks like it could've been drawn by a five-year-old.

"It's a viper ouroboros," Lev explains as Ernst starts to darken the scales. "The black color means you're privately owned. It means that no one is allowed to touch you. If they do, it's within my rights to kill them."

I know Lev's trying to make me feel better, trying to get me to understand that no one else can touch me, and I appreciate it, but I'm also still trying to wrap my head around the fact that I'm in a club that traffics women and I've just been sold and am now his property. It's a lot to take in, especially with my head throbbing the way it is.

The tattoo is intricate, but it's thin, so it doesn't take the several hours I feared it would. When he's putting the finishing touches on the head that's biting its own tail, Matvey stands up and pockets his phone. He's kept his hood pulled up this whole time and hasn't said another word since his comment about being picky.

As soon as Ernst finishes, Lev stands up, taking me with him. Matvey opens the door for us and then follows as we step out. David's waiting at the end of the hall.

"Enjoy your pet," he says, raising his drink in a toast with a laugh.

Lev grins as we walk past. "I will, David, and I'll be in touch about the fight we talked about."

"Looking forward to it. I sent off the video I took of tonight's fight, and I mentioned the upcoming one. I think he'll be very interested in that," David says, watching us walk off.

As soon as we're far enough away, Lev looks down at me, and the pain in his eyes shocks me to my core. "I'm so fucking sorry, *malinkaya*."

Matvey steps in front of us so he can push his way through the crowd, giving us a path to follow. When I look at Lev again, he's wearing that same mask, and just to solidify this as the worst day of my life, a beautiful redhead comes into view. She smiles at Lev and dances her fingers along his arm.

She doesn't even seem to notice that he's carrying me. It's like I'm invisible to her when she leans in close and says, "Come back soon for another dance, Lev."

I close my good eye, not wanting to see any more. He ignores the woman and keeps walking. I hear a door open and feel a cool breeze hit my skin. A man laughs and tells Lev to have fun breaking me in, and I feel like I'm seconds away from throwing up.

I open my eye to see where he's taking me. He speeds up, walking faster until we get to a black Camaro. Matvey opens the door for him, and Lev gets in, keeping me on his lap. His brother walks around to the driver's side while Lev runs his eyes over me.

"I'm so fucking sorry, baby," he says again. "Did Sebastian do all of this?"

"Yeah," I whisper. I feel like my lip is twice its normal size, and every breath I take sends a shot of pain through my ribs and chest.

Matvey gets in and looks over at me. He doesn't look nearly as scary as he did in David's office. Intimidating? Yes, definitely yes, but he no longer scares me. He looks me over, seeing the damage, and I can tell it pisses him off too. He finally meets my eyes and says, "Nice hoodie."

It's the last thing I'm expecting, and when I let out a small laugh, he gives me the barest hint of a smile before starting the car and getting us the hell out of here. Lev grabs his phone, but before he does anything, he looks at me and says, "I promise I'll explain all this, but first we need to get you taken care of." He finds the contact he's looking for and makes the call.

"I need you to send your doctor to our penthouse," he says. "Yeah, I know all this Dominic, and I'm not apologizing for shooting you. You would've done the same to me if I hadn't beaten you to it, and you damn well know it. Are you going to send him over or not?" After a few seconds, he adds, "I'll fucking owe you, okay?"

Matvey mutters something in Russian and shakes his head while I try to wrap my brain around the fact that Lev's just admitted to shooting someone.

"Thanks, I'll text you the address."

Lev hangs up and then looks at me while telling Matvey something in Russian. The tone of his voice is pained, and the look in his eyes has me reaching a hand up to cup his face, because despite everything that's happened tonight and all the questions I have, he still owns every part of

me. He has since the first moment I saw him, and I can't stand to see him in pain.

"You need stitches," I tell him, running my fingers gently along his bloody cheek. His eyebrow is still bleeding a little bit, and it looks awful.

Lev lets out a disbelieving laugh. "Don't you dare worry about me."

"I'm really tired, Lev," I say, feeling my eye grow heavy. It's annoying as hell to only be able to see out of one eye, and I no longer have the strength to keep doing it.

"I know you are, baby, but I need you to stay awake for just a little bit longer."

"Just a few more minutes, Jolene," Matvey says. "We're almost home."

I want to smile at the thought of it being my home too, but I can barely move my lips at this point. Lev kisses my forehead while Matvey makes a call and speaks to someone in Russian.

"Stay with me," Lev whispers against my skin. "Don't fall asleep, baby. I swear I'm going to make this up to you. I'm going to kill your fucking brother for all the times he's hit you, and no one will ever hurt you again."

I nod, or at least I try to, but I feel like I'm carrying a heavy weight, and I just want to set the damn thing down. To force myself to stay awake, I focus on the pain. Instead of trying to escape it, I do a mental map of my body, noting every single part that hurts. I quickly realize it's everywhere. There's not a single part of my body that isn't aching or throbbing or screaming at me.

"We're here, baby," Lev says, kissing my forehead again.

"No helmet?"

He's so upset that all he can manage is a small smile at my joke. "No, *malinkaya*. No helmet this time. You're never leaving, so I don't need to hide it from you."

I'm not sure what to say to that, so I don't say anything. When the car stops, Lev keeps me pressed against his chest and gets out, walking me to the elevator with his brother. This is the first time I'm seeing any of this, and as much as I hurt and as tired as I am, I can't help but grip Lev's shoulders and look around, wanting to see everything. Lev's motorcycle is parked in its usual spot, and when he sees me looking at it, he says, "One of my brothers brought it back for me."

I notice Matvey holding my backpack. "How'd you get my bag?"

“I saw it sitting on the floor when I finally pushed my way through the crowd,” Lev says. “After I realized you were gone, I grabbed it and called my brothers.”

After a quick elevator ride, the doors open, and I finally get to see the penthouse that I’ve already visited twice. The wall of family photos is not at all what I’m expecting. Lev and his brothers line the walls, first with just one woman and then with two. The wedding photos are beautiful, but my head is throbbing too much for me to fully appreciate the sight of Lev in a tux.

When we turn the corner, I hear a feminine gasp before a woman asks, “Is she okay? What can we do to help?”

I look over and see a short brunette looking at me, worry and concern etched all over her beautiful face. There’s a man behind her, an arm wrapped gently around her upper chest. His thumb caresses her skin as she leans into him for comfort.

“It’s okay, Emily,” Lev tells her. “Dominic’s sending his doctor over. Please don’t worry.”

Emily’s hands rest on her stomach, and I see what looks like a small baby bump. The man behind her kisses her head and then gives me a smile as another couple walks into the room. The woman takes one look at me and puts her hand to her mouth. She also has a tattooed Melnikov brother behind her, and even though these brothers don’t look alike, they definitely have some similarities.

“Lev, I think I might be sick,” I whisper, when the room starts to spin a bit.

“Fuck, baby, I’m sorry.” He carries me through the room, telling his brothers something in Russian. We go up the stairs like usual, but this time he walks past the home gym and into a bedroom. The room is beautiful, but I’m feeling too lousy to appreciate it. He carefully sets me down on a king-size bed with a dark grey down comforter.

“I’ll get it bloody,” I say, not wanting to mess up his nice bed.

“Baby, I don’t give a fuck about that.” He helps me lay down and then sits on the edge of the bed. His fingers brush back my hair as his eyes roam over me, taking in the damage.

“I might have some bruises tomorrow,” I whisper, but he’s having none of my dark sense of humor right now.

He shakes his head and lifts my hand to kiss the back of it. His touch is so gentle, like he knows exactly how much pain I'm in right now and how to touch me so he doesn't add to it.

"When I saw those men behind you, and I couldn't get to you," he stops talking, closing his eyes at the memory. "I've never been so fucking scared before. I couldn't find you, and I couldn't get to you, and I knew who you were with and what they're capable of."

"How do you know them?" I ask, but before he can answer there's a soft knock at the door.

"Come in," Lev calls out.

The door opens and a man walks in with a medical bag. He looks like he's probably early sixties, more grey than black in his hair, brown eyes, and a slight Italian accent when he speaks.

"I'm Dr. Bianchi. Mr. Alessi told me to come over." He looks at me and gives me a friendly smile. "I'm guessing you're my patient for the evening."

"Him too," I say, pointing a finger at Lev. "He needs stitches."

"Don't worry about me," Lev says. "Just look at her. The fucker that hit her is more than twice her size. I'm afraid he might've cracked a rib, and she's feeling nauseous and wants to sleep. Her lip is split, her eyes's swollen shut, and I'm pretty sure the bastard kicked her while she was down."

He's obviously been paying attention, and when he looks over at me, I pat his hand and give him as big of a smile as I can to let him know I'm okay.

"Well, let's see what we're dealing with," Dr. Bianchi says, stepping closer. He sets the bag on the bed and motions for Lev to give him some space.

I squeeze Lev's hand. "Don't leave."

"Never, baby. I'll be right here."

The doctor grabs a stethoscope and flashlight while he asks, "What's your name?"

"Jolene."

"I always loved that song," he says with a smile.

"I'm guessing my mom did too," I tell him, and then I settle back with a sigh, wanting to get this over with.

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Chapter 8

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Lev

The sight of Jolene lying on my bed, so bruised and swollen I can barely recognize her sweet face is slowly killing me with each passing second. I've been around violence my entire life, and it's never bothered me, not one fucking bit, but her blood, her beautiful skin marred with cuts and bruises makes me feel like I can't breathe.

The eye that's not swollen shut meets mine, and she gives me a faint hint of a smile because it's all she can manage with her lip cut the way it is. She keeps trying to comfort me, and it's breaking my fucking heart.

"How is she?" I ask as soon as the doctor listens to her heart and shines the light in her eye.

"Her heart and lungs sound good. I'm guessing she has a very mild concussion, but it's nothing to worry about. I'll give her some painkillers when I'm done, and it's safe for her to sleep." He puts his focus back on Jolene. "I'm sorry, but I need to take your shirt and pants off to see all the damage."

"Okay," Jolene whispers and then quickly looks to me for help.

I'm by her side in a second, helping her sit up so I can pull her hoodie off. I'm as careful as I can be, but she still winces. I know exactly what she's feeling right now. I've lived it too many goddamn times, and I hate that she's having to experience it.

"Almost done, *malinkaya*." I keep her bra on and help her lay back down before I undo her jeans. I look into her eye, and I know she's thinking exactly what I'm thinking. This night isn't going at all how we'd planned. The hurt look she's giving me has me stopping so I can bring my face to hers. I kiss the corner of her mouth and whisper, "We're going to have a

lifetime together, baby, and I'll spend every second of it making this up to you, taking care of you, keeping you safe, and loving you so goddamn much."

She seems surprised by what I've said, but there's no denying how I feel about her. I knew I was falling hard for her, but when I couldn't find her earlier, I knew exactly how hard I'd fallen. Head over fucking heels, and there's no going back. I kiss her again and then very carefully pull her jeans down, gritting my teeth when she's in nothing but a lacy pair of panties and bra, the lingerie she'd chosen for me, for her first time with me. Instead of her first time, she's lying on my bed, beaten and in so much pain she can barely move. I swallow the rage that threatens to take over because that's not what she needs right now.

Holding her hand in mine, I caress her soft skin while the doctor examines her. I'd noticed the bruised knuckles earlier, and I know she punched him. I'm so fucking proud of her for trying to fight back, but the guilt is heavy because I know she didn't get near far enough in her lessons to be able to defend herself against someone like Sebastian, and her trying to fight back probably just made him hit her harder.

She hisses out a breath when the doctor starts pressing down on her ribs and when he gently turns her onto her side, she lets out a soft whimper of pain that has me breaking out in a nervous sweat. My heart is racing, my blood pressure probably at stroke level, and I'm starting to feel queasy. It's the weakest and most helpless I've ever felt in my life, and I fucking hate it. Even when my dad would beat me, I didn't feel like this. It was just me, and I knew I could take it, but Jolene looks so fucking small on my bed. She should be protected and loved, and the only bruises that should ever be on her skin are ones that I give her because I'm gripping her too tightly as we fuck, never in anger, and never like this.

"I don't think any ribs are broken," the doctor says. "I'm guessing badly bruised, but without an X-ray, it's impossible to know for sure. If her symptoms get worse, call me immediately."

Jolene rolls onto her back, her face even more pale because of the pain. The doctor looks at her face, gently probing her eye and lip before standing back up and grabbing some supplies from his bag. He washes her cuts, making sure she doesn't need stitches. He puts a couple of butterfly bandages on her, closing the cut on her forehead near her eye and one on her cheek.

“You’re going to be in a lot of pain for several days,” he tells her, “but I’ll leave you some painkillers that will help. I want you to ice your face and ribs and sleep as much as possible. You need to rest and take it easy, but everything will heal, and I don’t think you’re going to have any permanent damage from this.”

He turns to look at me. “I’m guessing she won’t be around this man again.”

“She will not,” I say, and he nods at the hard tone of my voice, knowing exactly what it means. He works for the Alessi family. The man’s no stranger to murder.

“Good.” He grabs a bottle of pills from his bag and hands them to me. “Give her two now. You can clean her up. A bath might feel good, but don’t leave her unsupervised.”

“I won’t.” I don’t mention that she’ll never be unsupervised again.

“Also, put something on that tattoo. It looks very new and irritated.”

“I will,” I tell him.

“I hope you feel better soon, Jolene. Try and get some rest, okay?”

She nods and says, “Thank you, Dr. Bianchi.”

He smiles at her and pats her knee before I drape the comforter over her body so she’s no longer on display.

When he turns to go, Jolene tries to grab his hand. “Wait, you have to look at Lev.”

“Baby, I’m fine,” I try and tell her, but she just gets more upset.

“No, his eyebrow. His piercing was ripped out. He needs stitches.”

She’s so upset that I sit down on the bed next to her, patting her thigh as I let the doctor look at me. When she sees that I’m being taken care of, she relaxes and calms down.

“You could use a few stitches, Mr. Melnikov,” he says.

“Just do what you need to do, doc,” I tell him, keeping my hand on Jolene.

He’s not nearly as gentle with me, but he isn’t rough, just efficient and no-nonsense. He cleans out the cut, and when he goes to grab a syringe to numb it, I wave it off. “Just stitch the damn thing up so I can take care of her.”

The slight smirk and soft grunt he gives tells me he’s used to men refusing the painkiller. This isn’t the first time I’ve been stitched up, and I’m guessing it won’t be the last. I’ve had the eyebrow piercing since I was

seventeen, though, and I'm pissed that Sebastian was the one to rip it out. I'd lost focus when I'd seen David and Aaron standing behind Jolene. It's the only time I've ever been distracted so badly in a fight. It had taken everything I had to not run out of the ring. I'd forced myself to stay in because I knew one of David's men was filming me for Konstantin. I couldn't fuck that up. I had no idea this was going to happen, though, and had I known it, I wouldn't have been able to continue the fight. Guilt rips through me at knowing it, but there's no way in hell I could've stayed knowing this was going to happen to Jolene. No fucking way.

Her small fingers run over my palm, still trying to comfort me, even though she's the one that needs taking care of. I barely register the pain of the needle going through my skin. The doctor works fast, and when he's done, he puts some more disinfectant on it and then a small bandage.

"Thanks, doc. My brothers will make sure you get your money," I tell him.

He lifts a hand and shakes his head. "Dominic is taking care of it."

I'm too tired to argue, so I just nod and watch him leave. Grabbing a bottle of water from my nightstand, I open it and get two of the pain pills.

"Here you go, baby." I slip the pills between her lips when she opens her mouth for me and then help her with the water. She winces when it hits her lip, but she's able to get a mouthful so she can swallow the pills. "I'll get you some straws so it's easier to drink next time." She nods and keeps her hand on mine. "Do you want a bath, or would you rather just sleep?"

"Bath," she whispers, "but I can barely move."

"You don't need to move," I tell her, pushing the blanket off. I very carefully scoop her into my arms. "You don't need to do anything, *malinkaya*. I'm taking care of you now."

"I have so many things I want to ask you." Her voice is soft, and I can hear how exhausted she is. I know she's not up for a big conversation, but I don't want her falling asleep and worrying about things she doesn't need to be worrying about. I keep her on my lap and start the water, letting the tub fill up while I think about what to say. I settle on simple, figuring I can fill the details in later when she's feeling better.

"My brothers and I are a family by choice. We're not related. We grew up together in Moscow."

"I noticed you all don't look too much alike," she says, "but you do in some ways. Lots of muscles and tattoos."

I give a soft laugh and turn off the water. “I can’t let you take a bath alone. Are you okay with that?”

“Yeah, you were going to see me naked tonight anyway. This just isn’t the way I imagined it.”

The soft, shaky sigh she gives breaks my goddamn heart, the one I didn’t even know I had until she walked into that alley, asking me for help, looking so small and helpless but also so fucking brave.

I kiss her forehead. “I’m not going anywhere, *malinkaya*. I promise. We have all the time in the world.”

“I’m really sorry,” she starts to say, but I cut her off.

“Don’t you dare apologize. You did nothing wrong, not a goddamn thing, baby.”

I stand her up just long enough to undo her bra and help her step out of her panties. Her body is covered in dried blood and red marks that will quickly turn purple. The rage inside me isn’t going to go away until I see her brother die beneath my hands, but I bottle it down as best I can and pull my shirt off. Turning her around so she’s facing the tub and away from me, I step out of my jeans and boxer briefs. Because I was so worried about her, I’m not hard, but I know this small reprieve is not going to last.

Grabbing onto her hips, I help her step into the bath and then get in behind her. Lowering her down, I pull her into my lap, holding her against me as she sinks into the hot water. Putting my foot on the bottom of the tub so my knee is out of the water, I rest her left hand on my thigh so her new tattoo stays dry. Once she’s settled, I rest against the back of the large tub and tell her more.

“Roman’s little sister was taken by sex traffickers close to a year and a half ago, and we’ve spent every minute since then trying to find her and bring her home.”

Her first thought is to try and comfort me, reminding me that she’s far too fucking sweet and innocent for the world I live in. She moves her hand from my thigh and reaches back to rest her palm against my cheek.

“I’m so sorry. She must be so scared. Do you have any idea where she is?”

Her words are slow, and I know how painful it is for her to speak, but the medicine is starting to take effect, taking the edge off the pain.

“We just recently learned the name of the Bratva that took her, and now we’re working on getting close to them so we can take them down. That’s

why I know who David is and the club and all that shit.”

“You bought me tonight,” she whispers.

“I did.”

“What the fuck does that even mean?”

I rest my hand on top of hers and kiss her palm. “It means nothing because you were already mine, *malinkaya*. I would’ve paid anything and done anything to get you out of that place. I hate that they had you for even one minute.”

“Aaron’s an ass,” she whispers, and my body tenses.

“Did he hurt you?”

“He carried me and didn’t like that I was bleeding on his nice suit. He called me a bitch when I moved and my blood got on his shirt. I did it on purpose,” she admits softly. “It was stupid.”

“What did he do?”

“He was just really rough with me on purpose.”

“I’ll be killing him for that.” It slips out before I can stop it, but it’s the truth. When it comes time to kill them, that little fucker is mine.

“Who are you, Lev?” Her words are starting to slur as she fights sleep.

“I’ll explain everything later when you wake up, baby.”

I grab a cloth and very carefully start to wash the dried blood from her. The sight of her bruised body kills me, but it’s still her body, it’s still the woman I’ve fallen completely in love with, and when I start to grow hard, I do my best to angle her away from it. I drag the cloth over her upper chest, noticing the way her nipples harden at my touch, and when she lets out a soft sigh, I can’t resist running my thumb over one of them. I’m not a good man, I never said I was, and even now, even with her like this, I want nothing more than to lift her up and sit her tight pussy on the head of my cock, slowly sliding her down my shaft as I watch her take every goddamn rung of my Jacob’s Ladder.

“Lev,” she whispers, and I know the pills have taken the edge off the pain and that it’s being replaced by arousal, but she’s also minutes away from passing out.

“I’ve got you, *malinkaya*,” I tell her, letting my hand slip lower under the water. My fingers drag along her stomach, and when I feel her soft curls, I groan and dip lower. “I’m going to take care of you, baby. All you have to do is rest and get better.”

When the pad of my finger hits her clit, she moans and tries to sneak her other hand to my cock, but I scoot her away so she can't. If she was coherent enough, all she'd have to do is look down because the head of my dick is sticking up out of the water, the Prince Albert piercing on full display.

"Let me touch you," she whines.

"Not yet, baby, not tonight." I distract her by giving her clit a soft rub. I want to make her feel good. I want to erase all the pain and replace it with pleasure, but I also know those pills are hitting her hard. I'm not sure how far she wants me to take this, but I'm more than willing to go as far as she wants.

When I hear her whisper, "Don't stop," I smile and keep rubbing.

"Not even after you pass out?" I tease, but I'm not exactly kidding.

"Not even then," she whispers, making my cock hard as fucking steel.

I give her another firm rub. "This is what I want you to focus on, *malinkaya*. Don't think about the pain, don't think about how scared you were, just think about how good it feels to have my fingers on your pussy. That's all that matters right now, baby. Let me make you feel good."

I can't heal her. I can't remove the bruises and cuts from her skin or force the swelling to go down, but I can give her this. Her hand starts to slip from my face, and I grab it to keep her tattooed wrist out of the water as I slip one finger into her tight pussy. She may be seconds away from losing consciousness, but her body grips me like it's never letting go.

"Fucking hell," I groan, kissing her head and breathing in the scent of her.

Every stroke I give hits her clit, and when I feel her body tense, she whispers my name and moans against my neck.

"Good girl, baby," I groan when she clamps down on my finger even harder, drawing me further into the wet heat of her. "That's my good fucking girl," I praise.

When the orgasm starts to fade, she gives one more sexy whimper and then lets the strong painkillers pull her under. I don't take my finger out of her. I hold her, never wanting to move from this spot. I watch her chest rise and fall, making sure her breathing remains steady and peaceful and whisper to her in Russian, telling her that I've fallen in love with her and that I'm never letting her go.

The water starts to grow cold, and when I flick the lever with my toe, letting the tub drain, I don't get up. I hold her, watching as her body is slowly revealed to me. When I see my hand cupping her pussy, one finger still nestled inside, I suddenly realize how badly I want to see her, see *all* of her. Before I can talk myself out of it, I reach up and grab the razor and shaving cream that's sitting on the shelf near me. Slowly sliding my finger out of her, I run my hands down the thighs I'll never be able to get enough of and hook her legs over mine so her pussy is spread wide. I've never been so fucking grateful for this giant-ass tub that until tonight I always thought was completely useless.

Squirting out some shaving cream, I lather her pussy up and get to work. It's not a quick process. I have to keep stopping to turn on the handheld nozzle so I can rinse the blade and when I get to her pussy lips, it's an exercise in extreme patience because the last thing I want to do is cut her. Every few minutes, I kiss her cheek and tell her what a good girl she is, and when she's shaved bare, I rinse us both off and groan at the sight of her.

She's so fucking beautiful. Her legs are still hooked over mine, and when I spread my knees wider, she opens up even more for me. There's no way in fuck I can resist touching her. A goddamn saint couldn't resist this, so I know I don't stand a chance in hell. I slide my fingers over her silky smooth mound, my cock aching with the need to fill her. I can't think about anything except my need for her. All the adrenaline from earlier, the fear and worry and rage, all of it turns into a feral lust that consumes every goddamn part of me.

Knowing I'm going straight to fucking hell for this, I scoot her over enough so she's sitting on one of my thighs. Wrapping my hand over hers, I bring it to my cock, hissing out a breath when I tighten my grip and feel her fingers around my piercings. I slide a finger back into her and use her hand to jerk myself off while her pussy clenches around my finger.

'Fuck, baby,' I groan against the side of her head, knowing it's not going to take me long at all.

She lets out a soft moan, growing so wet that I can hear it as I slowly finger-fuck her.

'I've got you, *malinkaya*,' I growl, 'and I'm about to cum all over your perfect body.'

'Lev,' she whispers, and when I feel her hand tighten around me all on her own, I growl her name and come so hard it steals my vision. The wet

heat of my release covers our hands, my stomach, and her side.

“Jesus Christ,” I grit out when I’m able to speak. She’s already fallen back asleep by the time I use the handheld nozzle to clean us both off again. Grabbing a towel, I wrap it around her and carry her out of the bathroom. Putting her back in my bed, I hurry up and dry myself off. I want nothing more than to lay down with her, but I want to get an ice pack for her and some more water. Leaning down, I pull the blanket up and kiss the corner of her mouth.

“I’ll be right back, *malinkaya*,” I whisper against her skin.

She gives a soft moan but doesn’t wake up. Not bothering with boxers, I pull on a pair of jeans and quickly head downstairs, not wanting to leave her alone any longer than I have to. I’m not at all surprised to see that everyone is still hanging around in the living room and kitchen, waiting for information.

“Is she okay?” Emily asks. “The doctor said she would be, but is she really?”

“She’s resting right now. He gave her some painkillers, and they pretty much knocked her out. I just came down to get a couple of ice packs and some water.”

“Danil said her brother beat her up, but how did she end up at the Red Viper?” Simona asks, following me to the fridge.

I dig around for some straws and fill them in on everything that happened. When I’m finished, I look at my brothers, “When the time comes, Aaron is mine.”

“I think we might be the only family that calls dibs on who they’re going to kill,” Vitaly says.

“You’re probably right about that, but I’m still calling it. He’s mine,” I tell them.

“David said he’s going to tell Konstantin about the upcoming fight,” Matvey says. “It might be enough to get him to come here, especially when we kill more of Alessi’s men.”

“Do you know when you’re doing it yet?” Roman asks.

“No, I’m not leaving Jolene’s side until she’s better, so it’ll be a few weeks, but that gives us time to plan out more attacks with Dominic.”

“I can’t believe he tore out your piercing,” Danil says, eyeing my bandaged eyebrow.

“I lost focus,” I say. “I saw David and Aaron standing behind her, and I completely forgot I was in a fucking fight. I’m going to take my time paying him back, though.” I give a soft laugh. “He’s not going to be happy when he finds out I bought his sister. You might want to up the security, Danil. He’s going to want to make me pay.”

“Already on it.” He keeps his arm wrapped around Simona while his other hand rests on the counter, fingers tapping a quick rhythm. “I’ve installed several more cameras, and I called Timofey. He’s going to put extra men around the building, and I’m doubling the bodyguards around Simona and Emily if they need to go out and do anything. Same applies to Jolene when she feels well enough,” he adds, letting me know that he now considers her a part of the family. I nod my thanks and grab the shit I came down here for.

I promise to give them all an update on Jolene tomorrow, and as they go off in various directions, Matvey follows me upstairs. He spends a lot of time in our home gym. The only way he can sleep is if he completely wears himself out, so late-night workouts are normal for him. Before he goes in, he stops me with a rare shoulder squeeze.

“You okay?” he asks, and I’m not at all surprised that he’s noticed that I’m not okay, not by a fucking long shot.

I lean against the doorway and shake my head. “Not really, brother. She’s so fucking sore she can barely move, and her eye’s still completely swollen shut. Her mouth is going to hurt for days, if not weeks, and so are her ribs and just about every other part of her body.” I close my eyes at the thought and shake my head again, voicing the fear and guilt that run through me.

“I should’ve stayed away from her, but I was selfish. I tried at first, but I couldn’t fucking do it. I should have, though, for her sake. Instead I was a selfish asshole and refused to let her go and now look at her.”

“That was going to happen whether you were around or not,” Matvey says. “Her brother made the deal with David without you being involved in any way.”

I know what he’s saying is true, but I still feel guilty, like it’s my fault somehow because of my ties with David, guilt by association.

“You’re too close to this and not thinking clearly. You were only able to save her because of your ties with David,” he reminds me.

Matvey runs a scarred hand over his cheek, scratching at the day's worth of stubble. When he looks back at me, I can see the anguish in his eyes. He tries to hide it, and most of the time he can close it all down and give one hell of a dead stare, but he lets me see it now, and I know it's how he feels every second of every goddamn day.

"If I could go back, I wouldn't push Alina away because I knew being with me would put her in danger. It would just make me hold her all the tighter, and I'd never fucking let her go, because the safest place she could ever be is right next to me, and as soon as I get her back, that's exactly where she's going to be. I'm never letting her go again. Does that make me a selfish jackass?" he asks, and then he gives a shrug. "Maybe, but I don't give a fuck. Not having her isn't an option for me. Even if we get her back and she hates me and never wants to see me again, it won't change anything. I'll spend the rest of my life watching over her, protecting her, and loving her in any way that she'll let me."

"She could never hate you, Matvey. My god, she's been in love with you her whole life. I've never seen anything like it. We all kept waiting for her to outgrow it, but every year it just got stronger."

"The day she was taken, I was supposed to meet her, and I was late," he admits. His voice cracks on the words, more raspy than usual, and I know the guilt is eating him alive. "I wasn't there when she needed me most. I didn't protect her like I should have."

"It wasn't your fault." I wait until he meets my eyes. "It's not your fucking fault, not even a little bit. None of us had any idea that she was being watched, that she'd somehow gotten on their radar."

"But we should have," he says. "I should have, and I'll never forgive myself for it."

"We should have," I agree. "All of us as a family should have done a better job of protecting her, and we'll spend the rest of our lives making it up to her once we get her back, but it's not on you because you were late one time. Don't do that to yourself, brother."

He nods, but I know it'll be a long time before he lets go of that weight from around his neck.

"I'm glad Jolene's okay," he finally says before walking into the gym. "She's good for you, Lev. I can tell."

I watch him walk to one of the punching bags, and when he starts hitting it like a man possessed, I turn and head back to my room. Jolene's

still exactly as I left her. I grab a cloth from the bathroom and some ointment for her tattoo and then take my pants off before getting into bed with her. I kiss her forehead before gently rubbing the antibiotic onto her wrist. She doesn't move while I do it, but when I wrap one of the ice packs in a cloth so it's not too cold for her and carefully press it against her eye, she moans and starts to move.

"Easy, baby," I tell her, holding it against her skin while I lay down next to her, spooning her much smaller body against mine.

"Lev," she whispers, reaching a hand up to try and feel my face. When her fingers brush my lip ring, her body relaxes, knowing it really is me.

"This will help with the swelling, *malinkaya*." I rest my head on the pillow close to hers and bring my other hand to her stomach. She immediately grabs onto my forearm and brings it higher, hugging it against her chest.

"Thank you for taking care of me."

"I will always take care of you," I whisper against her ear before kissing it. "Try to go back to sleep. I'll be here when you wake up."

"Okay."

I can tell she's not fully awake. Her voice is thick with sleep and the strong painkiller that's still running through her system, so when she starts to slide my hand lower, it's the last thing I'm expecting. She places her hand over mine, guiding me between her legs, and when I'm cupping her bare pussy, she lets out a soft whimper and presses me harder against her, hard enough for one of my fingers to slide between her soft, newly shaved lips.

I groan at the feel of her, burying my finger inside her as she sighs and sinks back into sleep. My body molds to hers, my hard cock pressed against her ass, the heat of her body mixing with mine, and the sweet scent of her surrounding me. It's fucking heaven. I hold her while she sleeps, keeping the ice pack on her eye and my finger buried inside her. I keep watch over her until the sun starts to rise, and only then do I allow my eyes to close, knowing I'll wake the second she starts to move and I feel my finger slip out of her.

Chapter 9

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Jolene

When I wake, the first thing I notice is that the swelling has gone down enough so I can open both my eyes, and the second thing is the thick finger that's still buried inside my pussy. The third thing is, of course, the pain. The painkillers are wearing off, and sore doesn't even begin to describe what I'm feeling. I keep still, not wanting to wake Lev. I can hear his steady, deep breaths, feel the heavy weight of his body against my back, and I've never felt so safe.

Last night is blurry, but I remember him taking care of me, the soft, gentle touches that are so at odds with what you would expect from a man who looks like Lev, and my face heats up when I remember the way he'd bathed me. Flashes come back to me, the orgasm he gave me, my legs splayed open while he shaved me, the feel of his thick cock in my hand as he used me to jerk himself off, the wet heat of his seed as it hit me mixed with the his sexy, masculine groans of pleasure. I feel myself growing wet around his finger.

I'm not sure if I imagined some details or not, and curiosity gets the better of me. I very slowly slip a hand behind my ass, and when my fingers find the hard length that's pressing against my cheek, I let out a soft gasp when I feel all the metal.

Holy shit.

He hasn't woken up yet, and I can't resist exploring. Without being able to see him, I try to picture what I'm feeling. He has metal barbells going up the length of his shaft. I start at the base and slowly work my way up, counting each piercing as I go. There's eight of them. How the fuck is that even possible? My shaky fingers go higher, feeling the piercing at the

crown. My pussy tightens around his finger as I imagine how something like that would feel inside me.

I let out a surprised yelp when Lev starts to move his finger before he whispers in my ear. "Find something you like, *malinkaya*?"

"You're pierced," I say, wincing at the pain in my lip.

He notices and quickly lifts up so he can see me better. Sliding out of me, he smiles at my groan of protest and then licks his finger clean before brushing my hair back so he can see me better. His light blue eyes don't miss anything. He takes in every detail of the damage that I'm sure looks horrendous in the light of day.

"How bad is it?" I whisper.

His thumb grazes my cheek. "The swelling on your eye is a lot better, but your face is very bruised. It will be for several days. Your lip looks like it hurts, and it's going to be a pain in the ass while you heal. Every time you talk or try to eat or drink something, you'll be reminded that it's there." He pulls back the covers and runs his eyes over my body. "The bruising is darker today on your body."

"Sexy," I say, my sarcasm coming through loud and clear.

"You're always sexy to me, *malinkaya*. I thought my hard cock was making that pretty obvious."

"Your hard *pierced* cock."

He smiles and places a kiss right above my left breast.

"Is that why you tried to hide it from me?"

"I didn't want to scare you away," he admits.

"I want to see," I tell him, trying to sit up.

With a gentle hand to my chest, he keeps me pressed to the bed. "You need water, something to eat, and some more pain pills."

"After." When he keeps looking at me like he's not going to budge, I sigh and say, "Please, Lev. I'll do whatever you want, but let me see you first."

He arches a dark brow at me, and I realize how much I miss his eyebrow piercing. "I'm really sorry," I tell him, pointing up at the small bandage. "I really liked that."

He gives me a wink. "I can always get it pierced again."

I give him as big of a smile as I can manage as he gets on his knees, but then my mouth drops open when my eyes land on his cock. My fingers

hadn't done it justice. The man is fucking huge, and I was spot-on when I called it a monster cock.

"I started getting it pierced when I was twenty." He runs his fingers up the barbells that run up the underside of his cock. "This is called a Jacob's Ladder." His thumb runs over the piercing at the head of his cock. "And this is a Prince Albert piercing."

I take in the sight of him. "That looks like it must've hurt like a son of a bitch."

He laughs. "Pain doesn't bother me. I'm so fucking used to it by now."

I reach out and his jaw tenses when I run my fingers over him. "You're never going to fit inside me," I tell him, because I'm fairly confident that he will tear my body in two. My fingers hit the ring at the crown of his cock, and my core tightens when he hisses out a breath. I'm curious, there's no denying that. I want to know what it would feel like to have all this inside me, to feel the piercings sliding along my inner walls as he thrusts into me, spreading me beyond what I think I can take.

He wraps his big hand around mine, stilling my fingers as he leans down, bringing his face to mine. He kisses the corner of my mouth, being careful of the cut on my lip.

"I know you think I won't fit, but you're wrong, and I can't wait to show you how fucking good it's going to feel, *malinkaya*."

"Why wait?" I ask, and he laughs and pulls back so I can see the *are you fucking crazy* look he's giving me.

"Because you're still healing, baby, and I'm not about to take your virginity when you're in so much pain you can barely move."

"It's not that bad," I tell him, "and I'm used to this. This may be the worst he's ever beaten me, but I'm no stranger to waking up sore and barely able to move."

The pain in his eyes surprises me. He cups my face and lightly brushes his thumb over my skin. "Never again, baby. No one will ever touch you again. I may not be a good man, the kind of man you deserve, but I'm a man who can promise you that no one will ever hurt you again."

"Yeah, about that. I still have questions," I tell him, remembering more details from last night, especially the ones where he mentioned shooting someone and then promising to kill others.

"Later, you promised me you'd do what I said if I let you grope my cock."

I laugh, but he's right. Those were the terms, and I'd gladly accepted. "Okay, but I need to use the bathroom first. Do you have my backpack?"

He gives me another kiss and gets up to grab my backpack and put it in the bathroom for me.

"Do you have a shirt I can wear?"

He walks back over carrying a black T-shirt. Before he slips it over my head, he runs his eyes over me and then lightly drags a finger over my bare pussy.

"I hope you don't mind that I shaved you." He dips lower, dragging the pad of one finger along my slit. "I wanted to see you." He gives a soft laugh when I rock against his finger. "I don't know what the hell came over me last night. I had you passed out in my lap, and had to do it. I didn't want anything hiding you from my sight."

With one last stroke, he gives me a soft pat and pulls his hand back. Seeing my frustrated look, he smiles and kisses my forehead.

"I'll make you some breakfast. I left you a bottle of water and a straw on the nightstand. When I come back up here, I want to see your ass in bed resting and that bottle of water at least half gone."

"You're going to be an overbearing nursemaid, aren't you?"

He laughs and gives my ass a very gentle squeeze before he slips the shirt he's still holding over my head.

"You have no idea, *malinkaya*. Your ass is mine now, and I take care of what's mine."

I can't help but look at the ouroboros tattoo on my wrist, the one that marks me as his property.

"Fuck that," he says. "We're having that removed as soon as we can. That tattoo doesn't mean shit." He cups my face and steps closer. "You're mine because I love you, baby, and because last night when I thought I might lose you, it hurt worse than anything I've ever known. I won't be away from you again, not fucking ever."

I'm stunned into silence, a very rare occurrence for me, and before I can find my voice, he gives me another pat on the ass, gently nudging me to the bathroom before he turns and throws on a pair of jeans and walks out the door. With a sigh, I walk into the bathroom, wincing when I catch sight of myself in the mirror. God, Sebastian really went all out this time. I'd thought he was going to kill me last night, and if he hadn't been forced to stop, he might very well have. I wasn't completely honest with Lev, it does

hurt pretty damn bad, but the ice pack he put on me last night and the full night of painkiller-induced sleep has helped to make things bearable. He's not the only one who's used to a bit of pain.

I hurry up and do what I need to do, hissing out a sharp breath when the toothpaste hits my sore lip. I think my busted lip is what I'm most upset about. It kills me that I can't kiss Lev, and after seeing his beautiful cock, not being able to put my mouth on him feels like the worst kind of punishment.

When my ass is back in his enormous bed, I get myself comfy and grab the bottle of water and straw that he left for me. I've just hit the halfway mark when he comes walking back in with a tray of food. A shirtless Lev will always take my damn breath away, and this morning is no different. Even with my ass thoroughly kicked by my brother, I still feel like the luckiest damn woman alive.

He walks over to me, setting the tray over my lap and eyeing the bottle I'm still working on. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he watches me take a few more drinks, and when I slide the straw out from my lips, he leans in close and whispers a "Good girl" before running his tongue over my top lip. He takes full advantage of the fact that it's the uninjured lip and gives it a soft suck, pulling another whimper from me.

"How long are you going to make me wait?"

"Until I think you're well enough to handle it." He gives me a wink and pushes the tray closer. "Eat your breakfast, *malinkaya*. Finish it all and maybe you'll get a reward."

I look down at my full plate. There's scrambled eggs, a couple of slices of bacon, and a piece of toast. He's also brought me some coffee with sugar and creamer and another straw.

"I guessed on the coffee. I can make it a different way if you don't like this."

"You made all this?"

"I have many talents besides fighting."

"I bet you do," I mutter while taking a bite.

He laughs and sits down next to me.

"Did you eat? Do you want some?"

"I'm good, baby. I ate something while I was cooking for you."

I try to give him a piece of my bacon, but he just looks at me like I've lost my mind. I smile and take a bite.

“If I’m going to eat all this, then you can tell me what the hell’s going on while I do it.”

The corner of his mouth with the lip ring rises up in a smirk. “I can, huh?”

“Yes, you can. I want to know what the hell’s going on. I don’t remember everything from last night, but I remember enough. What do you and your brothers do? When you were talking on the phone, you said something about shooting someone and you said you were going to kill Aaron. You have a gun?”

Lev sighs and leans back against the headboard, interlacing his fingers behind his head as he gets comfortable.

“My brothers and I run a Bratva,” he says and then waits for my reaction.

“But you said it was a Bratva that was responsible for Roman’s sister’s disappearance.”

“It is. Some Bratvas are heavily involved in sex trafficking. We’re not. We’re involved only because we’re trying to get Alina back. We first moved here because we heard there was a large sex trafficking ring that operated out of this area. We knew the mayor was involved, so Roman went to a fundraiser to try and get close to him. He ended up falling in love with his daughter, who was also suspicious of her dad and his friends. They’re married now, and she’s pregnant.”

“I remember them from last night,” I say, taking a drink of my coffee.

“Danil, one of my other brothers, is a genius with computers, so he’s been scouring the dark web, looking for information, and he convinced David to invite him to a private auction. He bought Simona, and then married her. She’s also pregnant.”

I quirk a brow. “I’m seeing a trend here.” He smiles but doesn’t say anything. “They have auctions?” I ask, changing the subject before I can ask what his plans are for me.

“They do.”

“And he bought her like you bought me?”

“Yes, we just did it slightly different, but she has the same tattoo as you since you were both property of the Red Viper before you were bought by us.”

“I didn’t like that club, but you seemed to know it pretty damn well.” I take a bite of toast, remembering the way that woman had touched his arm,

wanting him to come back for another dance, which means she's definitely given him one before. The thought of that gorgeous woman grinding away in Lev's lap makes me feel like I'm going to lose my breakfast.

"Hey," he quickly says, leaning closer so he can cup my face. "I've never fucked any of them, *malinkaya*. We go there because we have to, and we accept lap dances because there's no way around it, but I won't ever be getting another one."

"You won't?"

"There's only room in my lap for one woman, and that's you. I don't want anyone else sitting in it."

"You've been with so many women," I whisper, and he doesn't bother denying it. We both know it's true. I hate it, and I try very hard to not think about it, but it's impossible not to.

"*Malinkaya*," he says, kissing along my forehead and temple, "I can't change my past. I would if I could. I would change everything for you, but I can't." He rests his forehead against mine in a gentle touch as his hand cups the back of my neck. "I love you, Jolene, and I've never loved anyone. I had flings that meant nothing to me, but ever since I saw you watching me fight, I can't get you out of my head. I tried to fight it, to stay away from you because I didn't want you involved in all this, but I couldn't do it. I couldn't walk away from you."

I reach up and run my fingers over his stubbled jaw, and he leans into my touch.

"I became a one-woman man the second I saw you, baby. I can't erase my past, but I can give you my future."

"You think you could be happy with just me?" I take a breath and whisper the fears that are running through my mind. "What if you change your mind? What if this is just because you feel guilty about what happened with Sebastian? I know you technically own me now, but what if you decide you don't want me anymore?"

Before he can answer, I press my finger against his lips and pull back so I can look into his eyes. "I love you, Lev. I knew about you way before you knew about me, and I've watched you all these months, knowing I could never have you. I can't go back to doing that. It would kill me. It would break me to the point where I would never recover, so be sure this is really what you want before you start making promises."

He smiles, and I can't resist running my thumb over his lip ring. "You love me?"

I laugh because he looks happier than I've ever seen him. His light blue eyes are lit up, and he's so fucking stunning it makes my heart race.

"Don't ignore everything else I said."

"Baby, I don't make promises lightly. I take them very seriously, and when I say that I'm yours, that you own every part of me, I mean it. You're it for me, *malinkaya*, and I hope you feel the same way because I'm not letting you go."

I smile as much as my lip will allow. "You're not, huh?"

"No," he says, and I can tell by his tone that he means it. "If you said you wanted to leave, I'd tie you to this bed and convince you that you can't live without me, just like I can't live without you."

"And how would you do that?"

He smirks and kisses the tip of my nose. "Nice try, little one, but you haven't finished eating yet. Maybe when you clean your plate, I'll give you a hint."

I give him a soft kiss. "I really hate not being able to kiss you like I want."

"Me too. I love your lips, baby. I've fantasized about this pouty mouth so many fucking times."

I pull back, surprised. "You have?"

He laughs and lays back so I can finish eating. "God yes I have, ever since I first saw you."

"What did you think about?"

He waits until I get another forkful of food. Once I'm chewing, he says, "About you on your knees, those pretty lips spread wide around my cock while I fuck your sweet mouth. I've jerked off to that image a lot."

I nearly choke on my bacon. I have to take a drink of coffee before I can ask, "You've jerked off to me?"

He laughs and runs the back of his knuckles over my cheek. "God, you're so fucking cute."

I'm still stunned by what he's said as I take another bite. I'm not hungry, but I do want to see what I'm going to get when I finish everything. He watches me eat every bite, a small smile playing at his lips and a hungry look in his eyes, and when I'm finished, I look over at him, unable to hide my excitement.

He laughs and puts the tray on the floor. Grabbing another bottle of water, he hands me two pills.

“But I don’t want to fall asleep.” I look up at him. “You said I’d get a reward.”

“You’ll get it, *malinkaya*, but first the pills. I’ll make you come long before they take effect.”

“Holy shit,” I whisper and quickly down the pills. “How are you going to do it?”

“With my mouth. Lay down, baby.”

Just the idea of Lev’s gorgeous mouth on my pussy has me rubbing my thighs together as I sink lower onto the bed. Instead of just burying his head between my legs, he slowly lowers his body on top of mine, making sure to keep all his weight off me. I grab onto his muscled shoulders, drinking in the sight of him and knowing I’ll never be able to get enough. He cups my face and covers my skin in soft kisses. When he gets to my mouth, he runs his tongue over my top lip before gently sucking it into his mouth. I moan and wrap one of my legs around his waist. I run my tongue over his lip ring, pulling a groan from him as he gives my lip one last suck.

“I love you, *malinkaya*,” he whispers against my mouth before kissing his way down my neck.

I run my hands through his hair. “I love you too.”

His hand runs up my side, bunching and pulling the T-shirt up until my breasts are exposed.

“God, your body is fucking amazing,” he growls against my skin as he kisses a line along my collarbone.

I don’t know how in the hell he could think that, but I’m not about to argue with him when he’s getting closer and closer to my aching nipple. As soon as his tongue hits me, I let out a shocked gasp and grip his hair tighter. He latches onto me, sucking hard as my pussy clenches and my hips rock up out of pure instinct. My body knows exactly what it wants, and when I feel the hard muscles of his stomach against my aching clit, I moan his name and nearly come on the spot.

He groans at the feel of me and gives my nipple a soft bite. Letting me go, he kisses his way to my other breast while I rock my hips, grinding against the peaks and grooves of his abs. When I whimper his name and dig my fingers into his scalp, he lets go of my nipple and kisses his way down

my stomach. He runs his tongue over every bruise he sees, replacing the memories with something far sweeter.

By the time he hits my smooth mound, I'm shaking with need. He kisses and licks and nips every inch of the skin he shaved. Before he can reach where I really want him, he presses his nose against me, breathing in my scent like he'll never be able to get enough.

"So fucking perfect," he whispers. "I wanted to bury my head between your legs so badly last night."

"Why didn't you?"

He gives a soft laugh and kisses me again. "You were passed out, and I thought you needed to rest. Now that I know you're okay with it, I won't stop myself next time."

"Good," I whisper and then gasp when he runs his tongue up my slit and over my clit. "Fuck," I moan when he grips my inner thighs, parting my legs wider.

"I love your birthmark, baby," he murmurs against my slit.

"My what?" I look down at him, not having the faintest idea what he's talking about.

"Right here," he says, running his tongue over my right pussy lip. "It's a small splotch that's just barely a shade darker than the rest of your skin."

I had no idea I had a birthmark there, and my face heats up in embarrassment. He must feel me tense because he runs his tongue over me again before lifting his head.

"Look at me, *malinkaya*."

I meet his eyes, seeing only hunger in them and not the disgust I'd feared because I look different.

"I fucking love it, baby. It's sexy as hell, especially since I'm the only one who knows it's here, and I'm the only one who will *ever* know it's here. It's my little secret."

I thread my fingers through his hair when he lets out a growl and slides his tongue into me, making me forget all about my insecurities. He fucks me with his tongue like he'll never be able to get enough, never be able to get deep enough to sate his hunger. Lev is a man whose feral side is always close to the surface, and right now he's letting it out. His masculine growls and groans fill the air around us, and hearing how much he's enjoying this pushes me closer to the edge.

“Lev,” I whisper, fisting the silky, dark strands of his hair tighter. My ribs still ache from last night, and each full breath I take sends a flutter of pain across my chest, but it’s just a faint annoyance in the back of my head compared to the pleasure building within my core.

He slides his tongue out and gives each of my pussy lips a soft suck. “I’m right here, baby.” His voice is deeper, accent rougher, and the heat of his breath hitting my aching clit pulls a mewling sound from me as my hips rock up, trying to close the distance. He gives a soft, deep laugh.

“You like that, *malinkaya*?” he asks, letting his breath hit me again and giving another soft laugh when he feels the shiver that runs through me.

“Fuck,” I gasp when he runs his tongue over my clit and then gently blows air over the sensitive skin.

“I could stay here for hours,” he says, giving me another lick. “And when you’re feeling better, I will. I’m going to keep you spread out like this, and I’m going to feast on your perfect pussy and make you come until you pass out.”

“Jesus,” I whisper, not sure if he’s telling the truth or not. I mean, is that even possible? I’m guessing if anyone could make it happen, it’s Lev.

The feel of his lips wrapping around my clit before he gives me a suck ruins my ability to think about whether or not it’s possible to pass out from too much pleasure. He growls and sucks me harder as he slides a finger into me. His lips and tongue drive me crazy, and every time I feel his lip ring graze my sensitive folds, it forces little sparks of pleasure all through me. I keep a death grip on his hair as my body tenses and I come hard. I moan his name, giving in to the ecstasy and letting it consume every damn part of me. He doesn’t let up. He’s ravenous and not done with me yet. His finger keeps rubbing the inner wall of my pussy while he rims my clit, giving me this short moment to recover, but it doesn’t last long. Before I’ve even fully come down, he’s presses the pad of his tongue against me, rubbing me in firm circles that pull whimpers from my spent body even as my hips rock up for more.

The second orgasm knocks me on my goddamn ass. My pussy clenches his finger, sucking him in deeper as he groans and worships my cunt with his mouth. My whole body shakes as my hands fall limp from his head. I feel boneless and weak as a kitten and so goddamn good that it makes me give a soft laugh.

He nuzzles against my sated pussy, sliding his finger out and then licking me clean. When his face is next to mine again, he smiles and kisses me gently so he doesn't hurt my lip. He smells and tastes like me, and I fucking love it.

"Rest, baby," he whispers, lying down beside me so he can pull me up against him.

"What about you?" I snuggle my ass against him, feeling how hard he is, but the painkillers and orgasms are working their magic, and I can't even keep my eyes open.

"Don't worry about me, *malinkaya*. I'm fine. Just sleep, baby."

I want to argue, but I'm too tired. Instead, I use the last of my strength to grab his hand and slide it between my legs. I feel him smile against my cheek before he slides a finger into me.

"Is this what you want?"

"Mm-hmm," I murmur. It's my new favorite sleeping position, and I'm not ready to give it up. With his strong body wrapped around mine and his hand cupping my pussy with his finger nestled inside, I give up the fight and fall into a deep sleep.

Chapter 10

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Lev

I make Jolene wait two more days before I let her leave my room. She wasn't thrilled about it, but I wanted her to rest as much as possible, and I didn't want anything stressing her out. One of the first things I did was block her brother's number in case he decides to try and contact her, and I've kept everything as stress free as possible for her. I've also been using ice packs on her face and ribs to help with the pain and swelling, but her bruises are still in the deep purple and blue stage. They'll fade to yellow soon, but for now, she's very colorful, and I can tell she hates it. It doesn't do a damn thing to hide her beauty, though.

Between the showers and baths we've shared and the oral sex I've given her and the hand jobs she's given me, I'm about to lose my damn mind. I've used every ounce of willpower I possess, surprising even myself, and I've somehow managed to not fuck her, but just barely. Every night I fall asleep with my finger buried in her pussy, wishing like hell it was my cock.

"Can I please leave your bedroom?" she asks, and I smile at the pouty, pissed-off sound of her voice.

"*Our* bedroom," I correct, making her smile. Her lip is doing better, but it'll still be a few days before I can kiss her how I want. "And yes, we can go downstairs today."

"About damn time," she grumbles. "I was right when I said you'd be an overbearing nursemaid."

I laugh and wrap my arms around her, bringing my mouth close to hers. "I don't remember you complaining when I had you pinned down on the bed earlier with my face between your legs."

"I will never complain when you have your head between my legs."

I kiss the tip of her nose and give her a wink. “I’ll remember that, *malinkaya*. If you ever get mad at me, that’s the first place I’m going.”

She cups my face and kisses my lip ring. “As if I could ever be mad at you.”

I laugh and pick her up, giving her ass a soft smack. “My baby’s so goddamn sweet.”

“Don’t you forget it,” she says, wrapping her arms and legs around me as I smile and carry her out the door.

My family’s been wanting to properly meet her, and when I carry her down the stairs, Simona and Emily are putting the finishing touches on supper while my brothers help set the table. It’s surreal watching the brothers I’ve seen torture and kill men lining up silverware and setting out plates. We’ve been debating hiring a cook. We recently hired a maid to come in a couple times a week, and we’re still getting used to it. We don’t trust easily.

I set Jolene down. A smile tugs at my lips watching her smooth the front of the hoodie she’s wearing. She’s nervous, and she’s adorable as fuck when she’s nervous. I rest my hand on the back of her neck and kiss the top of her head. Holding her close to me, I start to introduce my family. My brothers smile and nod at her when I tell her their names, and Emily and Simona come and give her a hug.

“We’re so glad you’re feeling better,” Emily tells her.

“Yeah, we wanted to see you earlier, but someone,” Simona says, shooting me a pointed look, “wouldn’t let us.”

“She needed her rest,” I say, not feeling even remotely sorry about forcing bedrest on her. She needed it, so she damn well was going to get it.

They laugh at my overprotectiveness, but I know my brothers get it. They would’ve done the same damn thing, and if I was feeling petty, I’d mention the forced naps both pregnant women have to take every damn day because their husbands are just as overbearing as I am. Apparently, it’s a family trait.

Caressing the back of her neck with my thumb, I smile when she leans into me and wraps her arms around my waist. I had no idea I was a touchy-feely kind of guy until I met her. I can’t keep my damn hands off her, and to prove it, my hand slides down her back to the ass I’ll never be able to get enough of. I give her a soft squeeze, winking down at her when she shoots me a surprised look.

I lean down so only she can hear me. “It’s your fault for wearing yoga pants.” Kissing her cheek, I lead her over to the table, ignoring Danil’s and Roman’s smug grins at seeing my ass in love, a position I swore I’d never be in. Vitaly’s grin is even bigger when we sit down and he passes Jolene a roll.

“So how are you feeling?” he asks her. “Is Lev taking good care of you?”

He smirks when every part of her face that isn’t bruised turns red. “Um, yeah, he’s been taking very good care of me.”

“Well, that’s good to hear,” he says. “I don’t know if you’re aware, but my room is down that same hall. It sounded like you were being taken care of,” he gives a soft shrug and I shake my head at him, “but I just wanted to make sure.”

Emily throws a piece of her roll at him. “You’re so mean, Vitaly,” she says with a laugh and then looks at Jolene. “Ignore him. He’s just jealous because he hasn’t met the right woman yet.”

“I will never meet the right woman,” he counters, “because there’s no such thing for me. There’s an assortment of women that help pass the time, and that’s it.”

“Well, that’s just sad,” Simona says.

“And a load of bullshit,” Emily says, earning her a laugh from Vitaly and a kiss on the head from Roman. She points a finger at Vitaly. “You’re going to eat those words one day.”

He lightly tosses an entire roll at her that would’ve hit her square in the forehead if Roman hadn’t batted it away. “Whatever you say, little sis.”

Jolene laughs while she watches them and fixes her plate. When I add more chicken to what she already has, she gives me an *are you kidding me* look. I kiss her and put her fork in her hand.

“You need the protein, *malinkaya*.”

“They’re bossy,” Emily tells her. “Every single one of them.”

“We’re not bossy,” Danil says, scooping out some potatoes. “We just know what’s best.”

Simona laughs and nudges him with her elbow. “You’re lucky I love you so damn much.”

“I love you too, *sladkaya*,” he tells her, bending down to kiss her.

When the kiss lasts more than three seconds, Vitaly clears his throat and says, “Don’t you guys have a soundproofed room for that?”

Jolene lifts a brow at me. “Simona’s a pianist, and my brother was kind enough to soundproof a room for her,” I tell her, but the laugh I can’t hide makes it clear the room is sometimes used for other things.

“Well, that was nice of him,” Jolene says, still blushing.

Vitaly laughs and reaches out to playfully smack Danil’s cheek. “He’s a big sweetie.”

“He’s going to kick your ass,” I say with a laugh.

Danil swats Vitaly’s hand away and looks at Jolene. He points his fork at me and tells her, “Lev’s the one who taught me how to fight when we were younger. He’s a damn good teacher.”

“He is.” She motions towards her face and lets out a soft laugh. “I just needed more than two lessons, obviously.”

I cup the back of her head and kiss her.

“It wasn’t a very fair fight,” Matvey says, breaking his silence.

“No, it wasn’t,” I say, bringing my hand to her thigh so I can give it a soft squeeze. “And he’ll be paying for that.”

She looks up at me, her hazel eyes searching mine. “Are you really going through with the fight?”

“I am,” I tell her, making it clear that there’s no talking me out of it.

“I want to be there for it,” she says.

“I’m not sure that’s a good idea.”

“I’m still going to be there for it,” she says, making Vitaly give a soft laugh. She rests her hand on top of mine. “I’m not going to try and talk you out of it. I know he’s my brother, but I also know that he’s beaten the shit out of me for as long as I can remember and that he sold me to sex traffickers. I’m not strong enough to kick his ass, but you are, and I think I’ve earned the right to watch it.”

I study her face when I say, “But I’m not going to just kick his ass.”

“I know you’re not, and I want to see it.”

There isn’t any hesitation in her eye when she says it, and I know she wants to see the monster who’s been traumatizing her since she was a little girl breathe his last breath so she can stop worrying about him, and there’s no way in hell I’m going to take that from her.

“Okay, *malinkaya*, you can watch the fight.”

She gives me a soft nod and picks her fork back up. I look over at Vitaly and Matvey, and they know what I’m asking before I even have to voice it.

“We’ll be there,” Matvey says in Russian while Vitaly nods his agreement.

“Thanks,” I tell them, knowing they’ll keep Jolene safe so I can keep my focus on the fight instead of worrying about her.

We finish our meal, and when Jolene starts to set her fork down, I look at the piece of chicken she left and *tsk* at her. Reaching over, I stab the last bite and hold it out to her lips.

“I’m not hungry,” she says.

I smile. “I don’t care. Eat. You need the protein and the calories.”

She lets out a heavy sigh, because I’m clearly one hell of a pain in her perfect ass, but she opens her mouth and takes the bite all the same.

I give her a wink. “Good girl,” I say just because I love how it always makes her eyes darken with lust and her cheeks turn pink.

While she’s still chewing, I take our plates to the kitchen to help clean up with my brothers. When she tries to join me, I give her ass a soft swat. “Go rest on the couch, baby. I’ll be there in a minute.”

I watch her join Simona and Emily on the couch, and when Emily grabs the remote, Vitaly groans.

“Don’t even think about it,” he shouts at her with a laugh. “Just because there’s three of you now, it doesn’t mean we’re going to change the rule about romances on movie night. Not going to fucking happen.”

Emily laughs and starts scrolling. “The only rule is about *historical* romances. You never said anything about romcoms.” She looks at Simona and Jolene and smiles even bigger. “That’s their own damn fault for being so specific.”

Roman laughs. “She’s got you there, brother.”

“They’re sneaky,” Vitaly says, scrubbing a hand over his jaw. “And now there’s three of them.”

I laugh at his somber tone. “You just need to have your own woman over there. She could help sway them to the horror movies you like so much.”

He lifts a brow at me, clearly not amused. “I can see that plan backfiring in a big way.”

“Maybe,” I say, shrugging my shoulders and loading up the dishwasher.

Roman switches to Russian. “Dominic has everything set up for the next hit. This one is taking place closer to the Red Viper, and we’re going to toss the severed heads onto Alessi’s property.”

“Sounds fun,” Vitaly says with a laugh.

“They’ll look so pretty on his manicured lawn,” I say, unable to keep the smile from my face.

“Uh-oh,” Simona says from the couch.

I look up to see three sets of eyes staring at us.

“I know that look,” Emily says, watching her husband with an arched brow.

“They’re going to be borrowing your pruning shears again, Emily,” Simona says.

Jolene looks at them. “What does that mean?”

Vitaly laughs and smacks my back. “That’ll be a fun talk you can have later.”

Everyone has a nice laugh over my future awkward conversation while Jolene sits there looking adorably confused. I toss Vitaly the rag so he can wipe the table before walking over to the couch. Sitting next to Jolene, I pull her into my lap and kiss her cheek.

“I don’t understand,” she whispers near my ear.

“We’ll talk about it later,” I promise and then wrap my arms around her, keeping her tight against me. “Do you feel well enough to stay down here for a movie, or would you rather go upstairs and rest?”

“Do you often have family movie nights?”

I smile. “It’s become a sort of tradition. We try to do it once a week. We rotate who picks the movies. It’s Emily’s turn tonight.”

“God helps us all,” Vitaly mutters, sitting to the right of us. He rolls his eyes at Jolene. “When she’s feeling generous, she can pick out some pretty damn good movies, but when she’s prickly, like she is tonight,” he says, shooting a pointed look at a smiling Emily, “she’ll sometimes decide to torture us with some godawful love story.”

She points the remote at him. “I’m actually not prickly tonight, and I’ve chosen a good one, but if you keep badmouthing me, I’m going to change my mind.”

Vitaly holds up his hands while Matvey takes the last cushion on the couch. “I wouldn’t dream of it. These lips are sealed.”

“That’ll be the day,” Emily says, laughing when Roman picks her up and puts her in his lap.

“Your wife is feisty tonight,” Vitaly says, proving he really can’t keep his mouth shut for more than ten seconds.

“Don’t I know it,” Roman says, giving his wife a wink before kissing her.

Danil scoops Simona into his arms while Emily starts the movie.

“We’re trying to educate these five Russian men on American movies,” Emily explains to Jolene. “We’ve recently found a middle ground that they seem to tolerate fairly well.” She looks at Vitaly, “As I’m sure you’ve picked up on, they don’t do so well with historical romances, but we’ve been easing them into ‘80s comedies, mainly John Hughes films.”

“Oh, I love those,” Jolene says, already grinning.

“You’re going to fit in just fine here,” Simona says. “I picked *Uncle Buck* last week.”

“And tonight we’re doing *Sixteen Candles*,” Emily says, clicking on the movie.

“Is this a sappy love story?” Vitaly asks.

“No, it’s hilarious,” Emily tells him.

“It really is,” Jolene says, looking at him with a big grin on her face. “You’re going to love it.”

Vitaly looks at me. “Is your girl trustworthy?”

I smile because it’s the first time I’ve had a girlfriend, and having her on my lap with my family around us feels so fucking perfect.

“Of course she is,” I say, and when she smiles up at me, I kiss her top lip and hold her tighter. She relaxes against me, playing with the hair at the nape of my neck while we watch the movie that is actually pretty fucking funny. I even hear Matvey give a soft laugh at one point. By the time it’s over, Vitaly’s raising his hands in defeat.

“You got me. That was pretty damn good,” he admits.

“Told you,” Emily gloats, making Roman laugh.

Jolene leans in and kisses my cheek. Having her on my lap is always a sweet kind of torture. I’ve been semi-hard for most of the movie, trying to keep myself in check, but I know that’ll change the second we walk back upstairs.

“Take me to bed,” she whispers, and I know I have a few seconds to get my ass out of here before I get an embarrassing erection in front of my brothers and their two wives, which isn’t something that any of us wants.

“I’m taking her to bed,” I say, standing and keeping her in my arms. “She needs to get some sleep and she’s late for her next round of painkillers.”

Vitaly laughs and says in Russian, “You’re not fooling anybody, brother. Did you finally decide she’s feeling well enough?” He laughs and adds, “Don’t be too loud tonight. I need my beauty sleep.”

I tell him to fuck off, but he just laughs and tells me to not scare the hell out of her with my piercings.

“What’s he saying?” Jolene asks as she waves a goodnight to everyone before I carry her up the stairs.

“He’s just being Vitaly,” I tell her. “He’s a bit of a smartass, in case you haven’t noticed.”

She smiles. “I really like your family.”

I smile back. “They really like you too.”

“So tell me about the pruning shears.”

I groan and walk her into our bedroom, kicking the door shut behind me.

“It’s hard to believe you and your brothers run a Bratva. You guys seem so normal and nice, but if you’re borrowing things like pruning shears, then I’m guessing there’s another side to you all.”

“There is,” I admit, “and we’re not all that nice. Not to everyone else, anyway.”

“So I’m getting special treatment?”

“You are, baby.”

She smiles at that, and when I carry her into the bathroom and set her on the counter, she grabs her toothbrush and the tube of toothpaste. We’ve fallen into a routine, and I fucking love it. She hands me the toothpaste so I can brush my teeth too, but before she puts her brush in her mouth, she asks, “Vitaly is obviously single and loving it, but what about Matvey? He’s so quiet, and I didn’t want to make him uncomfortable by just flat-out asking him about it.”

“Matvey is in love with Alina,” I tell her.

Her eyes widen, and I can see the pain in them. “I’m sorry. I had no idea. I’m so glad I didn’t ask him about it.”

“He wouldn’t have been mad. Matvey’s hard to get to know. He doesn’t open up easily, but he would never be mean to you. When we were younger, there was a fire in his apartment, and he almost died trying to save his mom and sister. Vitaly pulled him out and saved his life. Ever since then, he’s been quiet. Alina’s been in love with him her whole life, even before the fire. When she turned eighteen, things changed between them. I think he’d

been fighting his feelings for her because he thought she was too young and she's Roman's little sister, but he stopped fighting it, and he fell hard, but then she disappeared. It's slowly killing him, but we're going to find her. Those pruning shears were used to get information out of a doctor who examined the women after they were kidnapped, including Simona. He checked to see if they were virgins and then the women were held down while he fingered them and jerked off onto them."

"Damn," Jolene whispers, looking sick.

"We're violent men, baby. I'm not going to lie about that, but there's always a reason for the violence."

She finishes brushing her teeth and then waits for me to do the same before cupping my face and pulling me closer so she can wrap her legs around me. She's looking up at me with the sweetest look on her face. I sigh and rest my forehead against hers.

"Don't look at me like that, *malinkaya*."

"Like what?"

"Like I'm the good guy. I'm not. I'm the bad guy, baby."

"You're the good guy to me," she whispers.

"Am I still the good guy if I would kill anyone who hurt you? Am I still the good guy if I tell you I would've burnt that whole damn club down if that's what it took to get you away from David, and I wouldn't have cared one damn bit how many people died. I wouldn't have even tried to save them, because I don't give a fuck about any of them. I only care about you."

She doesn't even hesitate. She kisses the tip of my nose like I always do to her and says, "It makes you *my* good guy, and that's really all I care about." She kisses down my face, brushing her lips over mine before swiping her tongue along my lip ring. "How long are you going to make me wait, Lev?"

"It's only been a couple of days," I start to say, but she cuts off my words by reaching down and palming my hard cock.

"I think I've waited long enough."

I smile at her bossy tone. "You think so, *malinkaya*?"

"I know so. Take me to bed and make me yours. I hate that other women know you in a way that I don't."

I cup her face and tilt her up so I can see her better. "No one knows me like you do," I tell her. "Not a single goddamn person. I've shared so many

things with you that I never shared with them, that I would never share with anyone but you.”

“You have no idea how much it means to me to hear you say that, but I want you to share one more thing with me.” She grips me harder, effortlessly pulling a groan from me as my cock hardens to the point of pain.

I caress her cheek with my thumb, eyeing the bruising that still covers her face. “Are you sure you feel well enough? I’ll never forgive myself if we rush this. I’m not going anywhere, *malinkaya*. I will wait as long as you need me to.”

“I’m sure,” she says. “I want this, and I don’t want to wait.”

“But your body is still sore.”

“And now my pussy will be too,” she says with a smile that I can’t help but return.

“I’m being serious.”

“I am too. This thing is huge.” She grips me tighter. “Maybe you can take it easy on me my first time.”

“Of course, baby. I’ll be as gentle as you need me to be.”

I’ve never been with a virgin before, and gentle isn’t anything I would usually do, but the thought of hurting her doesn’t sit well with me. There’s the fun kind of pain that I can’t wait to explore with her, but that’s not what she would be feeling tonight. I don’t want to make her injuries hurt worse or cause her so much pain that this isn’t enjoyable. I want to make her feel good. I want to make her feel so fucking good.

“You promise you’ll stop me if it’s too much?”

She smiles and nods her head. “I promise.”

As soon as the words are out of her mouth, I pick her up and carry her to bed, more than ready to give her what she’s been begging me for.

Chapter 11

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Jolene

My heart races as Lev carries me to the bed. I want this, I want every damn part of this, but that doesn't stop me from being terrified. This is not going to be a regular first time. Most women lose their virginity in high school or college, and it's to a normal guy with a normal fucking dick, but not me. No, my first time is going to be with a huge, pierced cock, and I'd be an idiot to not be a little scared of it.

"Don't be scared, *malinkaya*," he whispers against my neck, reading my mind and seeing straight through my bravado. "I can be gentle, baby."

"I sure as hell hope so."

He laughs and sets me down next to the bed. I've never been so aware of our size difference as I look up at him, watching him pull his shirt over his head and toss it aside. I can't take my eyes off him. I drink in the sight of his chest and abs, and when he brings his hands to the button on his jeans, I follow his movements, mesmerized by the sight of the button popping free and then the slow descent of the zipper.

Splaying his pants open, he lets them hang loose on his hips. He's not wearing boxers. Before we went down for supper, he'd just thrown them on after being naked with me in bed. His hard length is angled down towards his thigh, the neatly trimmed dark hair just adding to his overall sex appeal.

"See something you like, *malinkaya*?" he asks. I can hear the amusement in his voice, and the soft laugh he gives when I still can't tear my eyes from the few inches of cock I can see.

"Yes," I say, my voice is barely a whisper, but he hears it.

"Then take it, baby. Show me what you want."

He holds still as I step closer, and when I run my fingers along his lower abs, he groans and watches me trace a line along his skin. I dip lower, noticing how every part of him is hard muscle. There's not a soft spot on Lev's body. Every part of him is defined and toned and fucking perfect. Reaching my hand into his jeans, I trail my fingers along his thick shaft and slowly wrap my fingers around him so I can pull him free.

"Goddamn," I whisper when he's out and I get an up-close-and-personal view of the piercings and the size that I doubt I'll ever fully get used to. He hisses out a breath when I reach out and run my fingers along his Jacob's Ladder, hitting every barbell from base to tip. When it's not enough, I grab onto his opened jeans and lean down. As soon as my tongue hits the head of his cock, exploring the ring that's pierced through his slit, his whole body tenses.

"Fuck," he growls, running his hands through my hair so he can gently fist it.

I taste his pre-cum as his musky scent fills my nose, making me ravenous. My lip isn't healed enough for me to take him in like I'm dying to, but I can still do other things. I tongue the piercing, lapping up the salty taste of him before giving him a soft suck. I take in as much as I can before my lip starts to ache and I'm forced to pull back.

"*Malinkaya*," he warns. "If you bust that lip open again, I'm going to spank that perfect ass of yours."

I look up at him and run my tongue along the ridge of his cock, giving it a flick before slowly licking my way down. His jaw is tense, his pupils blown, and the veins in his neck and forearms stick out even more than usual. Every part of him is tense with the restraint he's using. I know he wants to slam his cock between my lips and fuck my mouth, but he won't because he would never do anything that would hurt me. He's holding himself back for me, and I fucking love him for it.

I kiss and lick my way down his piercings, exploring and memorizing every inch of him. He groans when I flick the barbells with my tongue. I thought the piercings would mainly feel good for me, but his reactions let me know that it also makes everything feel pretty damn good for him too. When I let my teeth gently drag along his skin before giving him a soft suck, he growls my name and tightens his grip on my hair.

"As soon as my lip is better, I'm going to put you on your back and take my time exploring your cock." I look up and meet his light blue eyes. "And

then you're going to teach me how to give you a blowjob."

"Fucking hell," he growls, reaching down so he can haul me up and onto the bed. Keeping his eyes on mine, he quickly strips out of his jeans and then hooks his fingers under my yoga pants, slowly peeling them off my body. He takes my panties with them before pulling my shirt off, leaving me in nothing but my bra. Trailing his fingers along my back, he makes quick work of the clasp before tossing it behind his head to join the rest of our clothes on the floor.

When he gets on the bed, I take one look at his broad shoulders and all that hard muscle and his pierced, hard cock jutting out, and I instinctively scoot back as my pussy clenches in fear. His powerful size makes it impossible for me to keep still, and when he sees me scurry back, he gives me a sexy smirk. My back hits the headboard as my lips part in a gasp when he reaches out and grips my hips, tugging me down onto the bed beneath him. His body hovers over mine, cocooning me in all that muscle.

A smile plays at his lips. "Going somewhere, *malinkaya*?"

"What if you don't fit?" I ask, voicing my fear.

"I'll fit, baby, but if it's too much, tell me, and I'll stop." He runs his nose over my cheek, breathing me in as he lowers himself so his cock is pressed flush against my pussy. I suck in a breath, feeling the heat of him mixing with the coolness of his metal piercings. He's careful to keep his weight off me, and when he very slowly rocks his hips, sliding his shaft over my sensitive skin, I grab onto his shoulders and moan his name, shocked by the spark of pleasure that hits me from that one movement.

"Look at me, *malinkaya*."

I hadn't realized my eyes were closed until I hear his whispered words. I open them, meeting his gaze. There are so many emotions running through his. I see the hunger, the lust, the all-consuming desire, but there's also a sweetness there, the look he saves just for me, and there's also worry, and that's the last thing I want him feeling.

"I'm fine," I tell him. "I'm nervous, but I want this, Lev. I want *you*."

"Do you trust me?"

"Always," I say, not even having to think about it.

He smiles and brushes his thumb along my cheek. "You've changed everything, *malinkaya*. Every single thing I thought I knew and wanted—you changed it all. I never thought I would fall in love." He gives a soft

laugh. "I never wanted it and never understood it and didn't want to, but then I met you."

He kisses my top lip and cups my face. "The thought of letting you go, of standing back while some other man got to have you." He stops and shakes his head like the very idea of it is too much for him to even think about. "I will fucking kill anyone who dares to touch you, and I don't just mean anyone who hurts you. The whole goddamn world is going to know you're mine. I want you by my side. Every fight I go to, every time I have to go back to that fucking club, I want you next to me."

"Okay," I tell him, brushing back the hair that's fallen onto his forehead. "I want to be where you are."

"I'm not letting you go. You understand that, right?" He gives another soft thrust of his hips, pulling another gasp from me. "Once I slide into you, there's no going back. I need you to understand that. This isn't a fling for me, *malinkaya*, this is forever."

I nod my head and look him in the eyes, letting him see that I understand and that I'm more than okay with it. "Forever," I whisper.

He groans and runs his tongue over the seam of my lips before sliding between them and sucking my top lip into his mouth. His teeth gently graze my skin as he starts to move his hips in a steady rhythm that has my eyes rolling back in my head. One of my hands grasps his shoulder while the other one fists his hair and my hips rock up to meet his thrusts.

"God, baby, you're so fucking wet," he whispers against my mouth. "I can't wait to feel this tight little cunt wrapped around me. You're going to squeeze me so goddamn good."

His hips speed up as he kisses me gently, and the barbells sliding along my clit are quickly pushing me to the breaking point. When the orgasm hits and he feels my body start to tense, he runs his tongue along mine, swallowing my screams as I come hard and soak his cock.

"That's my good girl," he praises in between kisses and licks and soft strokes of his dick right where I need him. He draws out the ecstasy, making it last so much longer than I thought it could. When I start to come down and my body is feeling relaxed and weightless, he presses the head of his cock against my slit, but he doesn't slide into me.

"I want to fuck you raw, *malinkaya*. I promise I'm clean. I've never not worn a condom." His voice is ragged when he adds, "I need to feel you against me."

“Yes,” I whisper, running my hands through his hair as he presses harder against my slit and my body starts to shake.

He presses his forehead to mine. “Trust me, baby.”

“I do.”

“We’re going to take it slow, and I’ll stop whenever you need me to.”

“Okay.”

My body is already tensed up, waiting for the massive intrusion that’s coming. He smiles and gives me another kiss. “I need you to relax for me. Take a slow breath.”

I keep my eyes on his and take in a long, slow breath, and when I let it out, he slowly slides his head into me.

“Fuck,” I gasp, clinging to him as he pushes past my body’s natural resistance and I hiss at the pain of it.

“You’re doing so good,” he murmurs against my lips. “Such a good fucking girl.”

I have a death grip on his hair and my legs are wrapped tightly around his waist, and all I’ve managed to take is his head.

“Holy shit, Lev,” I whisper. “You already feel too big.”

“Easy, baby.” He very slowly starts to fuck me with just his head, letting the piercing at the tip of his cock roll over me, creating a sensation that has my back arching and my toes curling. “I’m going to show you just how good this can feel. You’re going to come so many times on my cock tonight, and when you fall asleep, it’s going to be with me buried deep inside you. This cock is yours, *malinkaya*, and it’s always going to be inside you.”

All I can do is nod as he keeps fucking me with his head while he lowers his mouth to my breast. His tongue circles my hard nipple, teasing me until I’m gasping for air. The mix of his tongue and that piercing sliding in and out of me has my entire body shaking, but this time it’s not from fear. All I feel is a deep, feral need, and this time when I start to come, I clutch him harder and beg for more.

As soon as he hears my plea, he fills his mouth with my tit and gives me another inch. The pain of him stretching me too far mixes with the orgasm racing through me, and the sensation is overwhelming. It makes everything else disappear until the only thing that remains is Lev and the feel of his body against mine. As soon as my body relaxes, he slides in a bit more, and I force myself to exhale slowly and not tense up.

“That’s right, baby, such a good girl,” he praises. “God, you’re so fucking tight, *malinkaya*, but you’re taking me so goddamn good.”

I’ve convinced myself that he’s just about all the way in, so when he says, “Almost halfway, baby,” I nearly choke on my gasp.

“You’re joking, right?”

He lifts a brow at me. “About what?”

“You’re not even halfway in?”

His lip ring moves as the side of his mouth quirks up in a grin.

“Jesus Christ.”

He laughs and brushes back a wayward strand of my hair. “This body was made for me,” he reminds me, “and your perfect, tight pussy is going to take all of me.” He gives me a wink before he adds, “When I fuck your ass for the first time, I’ll just give you half my cock.”

“Wait, what?” I ask, looking up at him like he’s lost his damn mind.

He just smiles and gives my top lip a soft bite as he slides in deeper. “Almost to the fourth piercing, baby. Do you feel that?”

When he gives a soft thrust, I feel the metal barbell slide past my pussy lips, sending a shiver through me at the sensation. I had no idea I was into piercings, but I am. I’m now a lifelong member of that fan club.

“Only four left,” he says, making me give a soft laugh.

“Is that all?”

He smiles and slides in more, giving me another rung of his Jacob’s Ladder. “Only three more now.”

Gripping his hair, I pull him closer so I can kiss him. The pain is intensifying, and I need his mouth to make me forget. I run my tongue over his lips, gently parting them before sliding in. He groans and opens for me, letting me explore his mouth as I feel another piercing slide into my pussy. He cups my breast in one hand, gently pinching my nipple while he feeds me his cock. The last two piercings slide into me, and the sensation of having him completely inside me has us both letting out a groan.

“Goddamn,” he whispers against my lips before I feel him smile. “I told you I’d fit.”

“Barely,” I say in a ragged whisper, making him laugh.

I’m not joking, though. I still don’t understand how in the hell he fit, but it very much feels like I’m slowly being ripped in two. When he lifts his head, he studies my face, noticing the pain that I’m trying to hide.

“*Malinkaya*,” he whispers, giving my nipple another soft pinch. “Let me show you what these piercings can do.”

He doesn’t wait for a response. He slowly thrusts his hips, hitting me even deeper before slowly pulling out, letting me feel every single piercing as they drag along my inner walls.

“Fuck,” I gasp, not caring about the sting of pain because it’s nothing compared to the sheer ecstasy he’s giving me.

“I’m going to make you addicted to my cock, baby,” he murmurs against my lips while he keeps slowly working his hips. “I’m going to make you crave it. You’re going to be so goddamn dick hungry for me, always wanting it, always needing it.”

“Yes,” I say, the single word coming out as more of a whimpered plea than anything else.

When he slams back into me, I dig my nails into his back and hiss out a breath from the force of it. The piercings drag along my inner walls, and when he grabs onto the back of my knee, pushing my thigh closer to my chest so he can go in deeper, I can’t even form words to tell him how fucking good it feels. He angles himself so the ring at the head of his cock hits my G-spot over and over again.

“I feel you, baby,” he murmurs as he licks and sucks on my top lip. “I feel your tight little cunt squeezing me even harder. Is my sweet girl about to come all over my cock?”

“Yes,” I groan, feeling my body start to shake.

“That’s my good girl,” he praises. “Let me feel how much you like my pierced dick.”

He gives one more hard thrust, pushing me over the edge. I grip him tightly as my body shatters beneath his touch. With a growl, he kisses me harder, running his thumb over my nipple as his tongue clashes with mine, wringing every last drop of pleasure from my spent body. I’m expecting him to let go too, but he doesn’t. His body is tense, muscles hard as he trembles with the need to come, but he fights it, and as soon as my body starts to come down, he sits up and grips my hips.

Looking down at me, he growls something in Russian, watching as he fucks my pussy. “So fucking beautiful,” he says, his accent thick and his voice ragged. “My good girl’s taking every goddamn inch.”

I lift onto my elbows, wanting to see what he’s seeing. The sight of his large, pierced cock slamming into me almost makes me instinctively close

my legs, because it looks so fucking brutal, like it should be excruciating, but it's not. Lev's made sure that the only thing I'm feeling is pure bliss. He could've been so rough with me, but he's gone out of his way to be gentle, to slowly work me to the point where he can fuck me harder. He's gotten me to the point where I can take it, and I know he's not going to hold back much longer.

His fingers dig into my hips, holding me in place as he speeds up. I fall back onto the pillow, running my eyes over his powerful body. His abs are flexed, every muscle well defined and covered in a light layer of sweat. The veins stick out on his muscled forearms, and just the sight of him is enough to have another orgasm building fast.

"*Malinkaya*," he growls, forcing my eyes to his. "You going to give me one more?"

"Yes," I moan, reaching down to wrap my hands around his.

"Eyes on me, baby."

I nod, lips parting in a gasp when he circles his hips, forcing his piercing to hit me right where I need him to. When I come, it's with his name on my lips and my eyes locked on his. I let him see me at my most vulnerable, not wanting to hide anything from him. His eyes darken and with a growl, he buries himself inside me as deeply as he can. I feel his cock pulse with his release. His beautiful body tenses as he growls my name. I watch my fierce fighter come completely undone as he gives me a part of himself that he's never given anyone before.

With one last pulse a shudder runs through his body as the last of his orgasm fades away before he gives me the sweetest smile and leans down to cup my face. He kisses me so damn sweetly, keeping himself buried inside me.

"I love you," he whispers against my lips. "So fucking much, *malinkaya*."

I wrap my arms and legs around him and smile. "I love you too."

Reaching over, he grabs something from the nightstand. When he presses two pain pills against my lips, I laugh but open my mouth for him. He gives me a wink and feeds me the straw so I can take a drink of water. Once I've swallowed them and enough water to satisfy him, he sets it back down.

He's still semi-hard inside me when he lifts up enough to grab my thigh, bringing my leg across his chest so he can spoon me from behind. He's

managed to do it all without pulling out of me, and lying down like this with our bodies still connected has me letting out a happy sigh as I snuggle in closer.

“You’re right. This is way better than your finger.”

He laughs and kisses my cheek. “It is,” he agrees, pulling the covers up over us. My eyes are already growing heavy. The orgasms and painkillers are working their magic. I grab his forearm, hugging it tightly as his body surrounds mine. My pussy is sore, and even in his semi-hard state, he’s still pretty fucking big, but no way in hell do I want him to move. This is exactly how I want to fall asleep.

“Thanks for going easy on me, Lev,” I whisper.

I feel him smile against my cheek. “I’d been rougher than I’d planned. You’re impossible to resist, *malinkaya*, and I lost control. I hope I wasn’t too rough.”

“No, it was perfect.”

He kisses me again and whispers, “It was,” against my ear.

Smiling, I drift off to sleep, and it’s an earth-shattering orgasm that wakes me the next morning. I go from completely unconscious to blinding pleasure in a split second, and all I can do is moan Lev’s name and fist my pillow while I try to remember how to breathe. His deep groan fills the room before he shudders and his cock pulses inside me. This position has his piercings hitting the front wall of my pussy this time, and the sensation is fucking euphoric.

“Goddamn,” he growls, letting out a soft laugh before he kisses my cheek and gently squeezes the breast in his hand.

“How the hell did you do that?” I ask, still trying to catch my breath.

He laughs and drags a finger over my sensitive clit. “I woke up hard and still inside you. You were in such a deep sleep, but your body woke up quickly for me. All it took was a few very slow thrusts while I rubbed your clit. You’re very receptive to my touch, *malinkaya*, and I love playing with your body.”

“That’s the best wake up I’ve ever been given.” I smile and stretch my arms up over my head.

“I certainly hope so,” he says, kissing my neck. “If anyone else has ever woken you up by making you come, I’ll have to kill them.”

I laugh at his misplaced jealousy. “You’re really cute when you’re being all possessive.”

“Cute, huh?”

I reach up and cup his face. He pulled off the bandage on his eyebrow the other day, leaving the black stitches bare, and when I run my finger lightly underneath them, he kisses my furrowed brow and whispers, “Stop worrying about me, *malinkaya*. I’ve been hurt way worse than this before.”

“Make a list, and I’ll kill them one by one.”

He laughs and kisses me again. “It’d be a really long fucking list.”

“How’d you learn to fight?”

He sighs and slowly pulls out of me, making me wince at how sore I am. “Sorry, baby.” He kisses me and pulls me against his chest. “I’ll run you a bath so you can soak.”

“Okay, but can you answer me first?”

His fingers run along my back as I rest on my elbow so I can see him. Before he answers, I lean closer and kiss his chest, inhaling the familiar scent of him.

“My dad was a fighter, and he taught me.”

The tone of his voice makes it clear this wasn’t a heartfelt bonding moment between him and his dad. “You didn’t like him, did you?”

“No, baby, I did not. He beat my mom, and then he beat me, and sometimes he beat us both. I tried to keep him off her. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn’t.”

“I’m so sorry,” I whisper, kissing him again. I can’t imagine anyone hurting a child like that. Sebastian was a shit older brother and he often hit me, but my dad never laid a hand on me. I picture a young Lev trying to protect his mom and taking a beating for it, and it breaks my heart.

“My mom always sided with him. She was drunk most of the time and didn’t seem to care about what was happening to me. She drank herself to death a few years ago.”

I don’t know what to say, so I don’t say anything. I just wrap my arm around him and hug him. He hugs me back and kisses the top of my head.

“You’re so goddamn sweet, baby. You know you’re the only person who’s ever hugged me?”

“What? How is that even possible?”

“My best friends became my brothers, and without them, I wouldn’t be here, but we didn’t sit around hugging each other,” he says with a soft laugh. “Alina’s hugged me, but she’s like a sister to me, and they were just quick brother-sister-type hugs.”

“No other woman’s ever hugged you?” I ask, the disbelief hanging on every word.

“They didn’t care about me, and I didn’t care about them. They wanted me because of who I am, but not a single one of them ever knew me.”

“Sounds lonely.” I kiss his chest and play with the strands of hair on the side of his head.

He shrugs his broad shoulders. “I never wanted anything more from them, and I’m glad you’re the first person to really hug me, *malinkaya*.”

“Me too.” When he doesn’t say anything else, I ask, “What happened to your dad?”

“You won’t like it,” he warns.

“Tell me anyway.”

He traces a line along one of my ass cheeks and says, “Danil doesn’t just use his hacking skills to try and find Alina. He’s been stealing us money since we were teenagers, and when we could afford an apartment, we all moved in together. I’d still stop by to check on my mom and make sure she was okay and give her money, and I told my dad I’d kill him if he laid a hand on her again. The last time I saw my mom, her face looked a lot like yours did the other night. I lost it. I challenged my dad to a fight, and I won.”

“You beat him up?”

“No, baby, I killed him. My mom was less than pleased, but I kept sending her money until her death.”

“I’m sorry,” I tell him, kissing his chest and hugging him tighter.

“My brothers were all the family I needed,” he says, giving my ass a soft squeeze, “until I met you.”

I lift up and smile down at him. “You’re such a big sweetheart.”

The deep laugh he gives lights up his whole face. “I think you’re still riding your sex high. The orgasm has addled your brain.”

“You’re a sweetheart to me.”

He cups the back of my head and pulls me closer. “Only to you, *malinkaya*. Now, let’s get you a bath. You know you’re going to want my cock again later, and I don’t want you sore.”

I don’t bother denying it, because he’s definitely right. He said he’d make me addicted, and I’m well on my way. I’m already craving my next fix. After a long soak in the tub where he washes me and examines every inch of my body to make sure I’m healing properly and nothing is looking

infected, we go downstairs and get some lunch. I'm surprised by how damn normal it feels to be around him, like I was always supposed to end up here, right by his side. He keeps me close to him while he makes us lunch, and when Vitaly walks in, giving us both a smug grin, Lev sighs and shakes his head before saying something in Russian that makes Vitaly laugh.

Not heeding whatever it is that Lev's said, Vitaly shoots me a wicked grin and says, "Damn, girl, I'm surprised you can even walk today."

"Jesus Christ, Vitaly," Lev growls.

Vitaly just laughs and walks to the fridge. "All I'm saying is I'm surprised." He gives me a wink and adds, "I've seen Lev naked. Respect, Jolene."

Lev yells something in Russian, but I can't help but laugh and return the fist bump Vitaly gives me. Truth be told, I am pretty damn proud that I was able to take all of him. Vitaly's still laughing when he walks back upstairs. I pat Lev's chest to let him know it's okay.

"He teases you because he likes you, all my brothers do."

"I'm glad they do. I really like them, too, and Emily and Simona."

When lunch is done, I ask if we can eat outside. I've been dying to see what the rooftop terrace looks like. The floor-to-ceiling windows that are in every room of this humongous place give an amazing view of the city, but nothing prepares me for how gorgeous the rooftop is.

"Holy shit," I whisper, looking around at the pool and hot tub. There's a large area with patio furniture and everywhere I look I can see containers of flowers. In one corner there's even a small herb garden and some tomato plants. "I had no idea all this was out here." I scan the horizon, viewing the city's skyscrapers and hearing the distant sound of traffic before following Lev to a two-seater patio swing.

"Is this okay?" he asks.

I smile and sit down next to him, sinking into the soft cushions while I balance my plate on my lap. "Perfect."

"You can come out here anytime you want." He picks up his sandwich and looks over at the hot tub. "That'll probably feel good on your sore muscles."

"I don't have a bathing suit."

"Even better," he says with a grin.

"Yeah, that wouldn't be awkward at all if your family walked out here while I'm sitting butt-ass naked in the hot tub."

“I would tell them not to come out.” He points past the hot tub to where the terrace curves around the side. “Besides, there’s a set of stairs over there that leads to one of the spare rooms upstairs. We could easily sneak down here one night.”

“It’s a date.”

He smiles before taking a big bite of his sandwich. He’d made two for himself, and I can’t even begin to guess at the amount of calories he needs to hit in a day. He must burn a shit ton fighting. When I have one bite left of my lunch, I start to set the plate down, but his eyebrow lift has me freezing in place.

“It’s just one bite.”

“You need it, *malinkaya*.”

I pop the last piece of sandwich in my mouth. “Happy now?”

He smiles. “Very.”

When he opens his arm, I snuggle up against him while he finishes eating. His long legs gently rock us, and the warmth of his body keeps me from getting cold. Being this high up, there’s a strong wind, but with my hoodie and his body heat, I’m warm and cozy.

“We need to go somewhere tonight if you’re up for it.” He runs his hands through my hair, finishing the last bite of his lunch.

“Where?”

“I need to challenge your brother to a fight to the death, and I need to do it publicly. He doesn’t know that I’m the one who bought you, but he will when we show up together at the warehouse tonight.”

“Are you fighting anyone tonight?”

“No, we won’t be there long. Do you feel well enough to come with me?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. I just don’t want to be around him.”

“You won’t be. You’ll be right next to me the whole time. Matvey and Vitaly are coming with us. Your brother will never lay a hand on you ever again, *malinkaya*.”

“I know he won’t,” I say, and I know it’s true. I trust Lev to protect me. There’s nowhere safer for me to be than right next to him.

Neither one of us is in any hurry to get up, so when he pulls me into his lap and keeps rocking, I rest my head against his shoulder, relaxing against him. The rest of the day is spent hanging out with his family, and then a forced nap that he insists I need. When it’s finally time for us to go, he

wraps an arm around me and leads me into the elevator with Vitaly and Matvey. They have a conversation in Russian while Lev snakes his fingers under my hoodie and drags his thumb along the skin of my lower back. Just that one movement is enough to send goosebumps all over me and a light flush to my skin.

Stepping into the parking garage, Vitaly and Matvey walk to the black Camaro that he'd driven the night all hell had broken loose while Lev leads me to his motorcycle. When he hands me the black helmet, it takes me a second to notice that it's a brand-new one. No tape and no one else has ever used it but me. I look up at him and smile.

"You bought me a new helmet?"

"Of course I did." He helps me put it on and then does the buckle for me before lightly tapping the top like he always does. The tinted visor hides the huge grin I'm giving him, but he winks at me, and I know he knows how big I'm smiling right now.

He puts his own helmet on before getting on the bike. I quickly hike a leg over and get behind him, snuggling in as close as I can get to him. The Camaro's engine revs to life right before Lev starts his bike. He gives my thigh the usual squeeze before we follow Matvey out of the parking garage and into traffic.

My arms tighten around him as I look around, taking in everything I'd missed before. My face feels like it's spread into a permanent grin when Lev weaves us through traffic before speeding up. He flips Matvey off before we fly past, squeezing into places his Camaro will never be able to fit. I laugh and hold him tighter, loving the feel of being on the back of his bike. I thought I might be scared, but everything Lev does is controlled and precise. He knows how to handle this motorcycle, and I feel completely safe as he takes a corner and passes a few more cars.

As soon as we get close to the warehouse and I see how packed it is, my heart speeds up. I know my brother's here, and I'm not looking forward to seeing him again. My fading bruises ache at the thought. Lev pulls up front where he usually parks, and I can't help but notice all the women who are lingering around for a look. They're in short skirts and half-tops, showing off the goods and making it clear he can have any of them that he wants, and I'm wearing a hoodie and jeans and my face is several different shades of yellow and purple. I wonder if he'll care if I keep my helmet on.

When he cuts the engine and puts the kickstand down, he gives my thigh another squeeze before I hike my leg over and stand beside him. I watch as he pulls his helmet off, but when I keep standing there with mine on, he quirks a brow and leans closer.

“Are you scared, baby? I swear he will never touch you again.”

I shake my head and then look over at the women who look like they’re about to start salivating. He sighs and undoes the buckle on my helmet before gently pulling it off me. As soon as he sets it on the seat of his bike, he cups my face and pulls me close.

“You’re the only woman I want,” he whispers before kissing me. It’s a slow, deep kiss, a claiming kind of kiss that’s making it clear to every woman around that we’re together. When he pulls back, I’m breathless and my damn panties are soaked.

He smiles at my reaction and gives my top lip a soft bite. “Do you know what I’m thinking about right now?”

“No,” I whisper.

His tongue runs over my lip before he says, “I’m thinking about that sexy birthmark on your pussy, baby. I want to run my tongue over it again.”

He smiles when he hears my sharp intake of breath, and when he pulls back, he doesn’t even spare a glance at his groupies. Threading his fingers through mine, he holds my hand as we wait for Matvey and Vitaly to get here, and it feels so fucking normal. If I didn’t have the obvious reminder of the viper tattoo around my wrist and the knowledge of why we’re actually here tonight, this could almost feel like a date.

When Matvey’s Camaro pulls up, Lev gives me one more kiss before we walk over to the car. Matvey’s in a black hoodie and jeans and Vitaly’s wearing a dark suit. The top buttons of his white shirt are undone, revealing the tattooed skin, and as soon as they’re next to us, I can feel the women around us shift their gazes to the two Melnikov brothers who they’re seriously hoping are on the menu.

While they have a conversation in Russian, I scan the growing crowd, trying to catch a glimpse of my brother. There’s a fight going on, but, judging by the lackluster response from the crowd, it’s not a very good one and there isn’t a lot of money riding on it.

Lev kisses my head and gives my hand a squeeze. “Stay by my brothers, *malinkaya*. I’ll be right in front of you.”

I nod and return the kiss he gives me before stepping back in between a waiting Matvey and Vitaly. The two men tower over me, and when I look at Vitaly, he gives me a friendly wink.

“Let’s go make your brother piss himself,” he says with a grin.

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Chapter 12

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Lev

I know Jolene is safe behind me with my brothers, but I still hate turning my back on her and taking the lead. This is the way it has to be done, though. I can't walk out there and publicly challenge Sebastian while I'm smiling like a fucking schoolgirl in love.

I'd texted David earlier to let him know what I'm about to do, and he's made sure to have some of his men here to start taking bets. His greedy ass wants to take full advantage of this. As soon as the fight in the ring is over, I step through the chainlink fence, walking out into the designated fighting area. The crowd knows who I am and at first they cheer because they think I'm about to fight, but when my brothers and Jolene walk out and stand behind me, they start to quiet down.

"Sebastian!" I yell, looking around for him. I know he has a fight scheduled tonight, and I know there's no way in hell he can stay hidden when I'm screaming for him in front of everyone. When I see him push his way through the crowd, I give a quick glance behind me to make sure Jolene is okay. She's securely between my brothers, and she gives me a smile to let me know everything's fine. I give her a wink before turning to focus on Sebastian. Two of his buddies follow behind him. Smart choice, but I don't need to play dirty to win a fight with him. My brothers and I have no plans to surround him and beat the hell out of him.

"We aren't fighting tonight," Sebastian says, and then gives a soft laugh. "Unless you're wanting me to rip out your lip ring this time."

The two guys laugh with him, but it's more nervous than anything else. They run their eyes over me and my brothers and stay a couple of steps behind Sebastian.

“I’m challenging you to a fight, dipshit,” I tell him, smiling at the way his brow furrows in anger. “This one will be to the death.”

His eyes widen just the slightest bit to let me know it’s the last thing he was expecting. When I step aside to give him a good view of his sister, his eyes widen even more.

“What the fuck is she doing here?” he yells, taking a step closer. Matvey immediately steps in front of her while I step in front of Sebastian.

I smile when I say, “I bought her.”

His face turns an unhealthy shade of red, and when he fists his hands, I’m reminded of how much bigger he is than Jolene. I’ve been punched by Sebastian. I know how hard it can fucking hurt, and knowing that he dared to touch her, to *hurt* her, has me using all my willpower to not just kill him right here and now.

He tries to see around me and points a finger in the direction of where his sister is. “You fucking slut! What the fuck did you do?”

“She didn’t do anything. You sold her to David, and I bought her.” I step in closer. “I saw what you did to her, you fucking piece of shit, and I’m going to kill you for it.” My words are low and meant just for him.

He narrows his eyes at me. “No, I’m going to fucking kill you, and then I’m going to kill her like I should’ve done years ago.” He gives a harsh laugh. “Or maybe I’ll sell her again, make some money off her pathetic ass.”

“You keep telling yourself that. Enjoy your last week of life, Sebastian,” before he can say anything else, I turn to the crowd and raise my voice. “One week from today, a fight to the death. You know where to go to place your bets.”

The crowd goes fucking crazy at the announcement, and before I walk out of the ring, I give Sebastian a smirk and then cup the back of Jolene’s head. I fist her hair, making it look rougher than it is and lower my mouth to hers.

“Show him who you belong to, *malinkaya*,” I whisper against her lips before parting them with my tongue. The kiss is hard, but I’m careful to not hurt her lip. She melts against me, opening up for me and running her tongue along mine. This might be a kiss to rub salt in her brother’s wound, but I fucking love this woman, and I let her feel every bit of that as my other hand grabs her ass and I give her tongue a suck. She whimpers against me, running her hands through my hair and pulling me closer.

“Not one more fucking step,” I hear Vitaly say, and I know we’ve successfully pushed Sebastian too far. I smile and give her ass another squeeze before pulling back. I run my eyes over her flushed face and heavy-lidded eyes and give her a wink. Keeping one hand in her hair and the other on her perfect ass, I glance over and smile at her brother.

“See you in a week, Sebastian.”

“Fuck you, Lev!” he yells at me, making me laugh. I almost feel sorry for the fucker he’s scheduled to fight tonight. He’s got a lot of rage in him right now. I hope he saves some for our fight. I’d hate it if he were too easy to kill. I’d like to draw it out a bit.

Keeping Jolene close to me, I lead her out of the ring with my brothers trailing behind us to make sure Sebastian doesn’t try anything stupid. David’s men nod to me when I pass by, already taking bets from the crowd. A few of the women try to get my attention, but I ignore them and lead Jolene back to my motorcycle. Her arm is wrapped around my waist, her small body tucked into mine, and as soon as we’re close enough I grab her helmet and help her put it on.

Vitaly smacks my shoulder on his way to Matvey’s car. “See you at home, brother. We’re going to stop and grab supper.”

I give him a nod, laughing when one of my groupies tries to get his attention. He waves her off and then looks back at me and shouts in Russian, “That’s fucking insulting.”

I laugh and tighten the strap of Jolene’s helmet before giving the top a soft pat. “Come on, baby, let’s go home.”

She nods and gets on behind me, wrapping her arms around my waist in the tight grip she prefers. I laugh and squeeze her thigh before following Matvey out of the gravel parking lot. Jolene gives them a quick wave when they go in the other direction for food and I take a left to bring us back home. She gets handsy on the drive back, making it damn hard to focus on traffic when she’s massaging my cock through my jeans. Knowing there’s no way I’m going to be able to wait until we get up to the penthouse, I pull around our building to the alley behind, parking the bike up against the brick building in the exact spot that I know is a blindspot in our security cameras. It’s a stretch of about four feet in between the two cameras on either side of us, which is just enough for what I need.

As soon as the bike stops, I open my jeans and free my cock before reaching around to grab her. Setting her down, I quickly undo her helmet

and pop the button on her jeans, smacking her ass to let her know she needs to hurry. She pulls one leg out of her jeans while I work on her helmet. Once it's off and her leg is free, I pick her up and hold her so she's straddling me.

My helmet's still on, and when she palms either side of it and lets out a breathy moan, I give her a smile that she can't see and say, "Pull your panties aside, *malinkaya*, right fucking now."

She quickly reaches down and tugs the lacy fabric to the side. I hold her up, hovering her right over the head of my cock. She's completely at my mercy in this position, and it has my cock dripping pre-cum to see her so vulnerable and ready for me. I lower her just enough so she can feel my pierced head pressing against her slit.

"Fuck," she moans, trying like hell to get me inside her, but she can wiggle all she wants. I'm the one in control here, and she'll get my cock when I decide to give it to her. "Please, Lev," she begs as she soaks my crown.

I slowly lower her down, feeding her my head before very slowly fucking her with it. Even though no one really comes back here unless it's garbage day, I know I need to hurry. I don't want anyone walking out here and seeing my girl come apart on my dick. That's for my eyes only, but I can't bring myself to speed up just yet.

I fuck her with my head as she digs her fingers into my shoulders and lets out a string of breathy pants that have my balls tense with the need to come. She's close. I know she is. I've memorized every detail of this woman, and I know when she's seconds away from coming. When she throws her head back, looking up at the night sky as she moans my name and clenches around my dick, I let out a groan and pull her down, giving her all of me in one smooth thrust.

Shocked hazel eyes lock on my helmet when she immediately comes again. She clenches around me, squirming on the cock she's trapped on, and fuck does it feel good. I'm buried balls fucking deep inside her, and she's not going anywhere. When she comes down, she rests her forehead against my helmet, breathing heavily and trapped on my cock. Her feet don't touch the ground, and the sight of her impaled on my dick and completely at my mercy is one I'll never forget.

"Lev," she moans, feeling how deep I am and how wide I'm stretching her.

I don't say anything. I just slide my hands down so I can cup under her ass and then I slowly raise her up the length of my cock. I raise and lower her, finding a rhythm that has both of us barely hanging on. Her pussy grips me so fucking tightly, making my eyes nearly roll back at the sensation of my piercings dragging along her soft inner walls, and when I start to speed her up, she lets out the sexiest whimper I've ever heard as she comes again. This time when her pussy squeezes me and I feel the increased wetness of her release, I let go too. I slam her down, burying myself as deeply inside her as I can get as my cock pulses and I shoot my seed inside her right where it fucking belongs.

Her body trembles before she collapses against me. I wrap my arms around her, holding her tightly as my cock slowly softens inside her. Normally, I'd stay buried inside her all night, but we're still in the alley so I have no choice but to lift her back off me.

"Fuck," I groan, when I catch sight of her used, swollen pussy. It's too dark for me to see the birthmark I'm obsessed with, but I know right where it's at, and as soon as I set her down, I run my finger over it, smiling when she lets out another soft moan.

I help fix her panties and put her pants back on before I tuck myself away and fix my jeans. When she goes to get on the back of the bike, I shake my head at her and point to the helmet in her hand.

"Seriously? We're just going into the parking garage."

I point to the helmet again, laughing when she gives a small huff of exasperation before tugging the helmet on. I reach out and do the strap, tapping the top of it before she gets on the back. I don't care if I'm only taking her fifty feet. She's wearing the goddamn helmet.

After supper, where Vitaly makes a point of mentioning that we got inside after them even though they stopped to get food, we crawl into bed, and I slide back into her. When we're both spent, we fall asleep still connected, and I'm pretty sure it's the only way I can drift off to sleep now. If I don't feel the tight, wet heat of her around my cock, I can't relax. It's a good thing my job doesn't require overnight travel. I'd be fucked.

The next day while Jolene rests, my brothers and I make plans. Tonight is the night Alessi's sending in more men. We could let our men handle things, but we're all too antsy to hand over the reins. We want to feel like we're getting closer, and spilling a man's blood is a good way to prove to yourself that shit is getting done. Plus, we're taking no chances with this,

not when Alina's life is on the line. We'll have some of our men with us for backup and to help clean up, but we'll be the ones leading this.

We're still discussing things when I see a glimpse of Jolene's auburn hair before it disappears out the doorway.

"*Malinkaya*," I say loud enough for her to hear me in the hall. She peeks her head back in, cheeks blushing when she sees all my brothers with me.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt."

"Get your ass over here, baby," I tell her, beckoning her closer with my finger. As soon as I can reach her, I pull her into my lap and kiss her. Vitaly smirks at us but for once doesn't say anything. I keep Jolene in my lap while we finish going over everything. She doesn't understand anything we're saying, but I've already told her I need to go out tonight, and she's smart enough to know what that means.

Danil's laptop is open, showing us a map of the city, and he's already spoken to Dominic today to make sure nothing has changed. We're as ready for tonight as we're ever going to be, but that doesn't stop Danil from going over it one more time, because that's just who he is. We indulge him, knowing that it's usually the little mistakes that get people killed, stupid things that could've been avoided with a little more planning.

Satisfied, he shuts his computer and we all agree to leave in thirty minutes. They leave the room, and once they're gone, Jolene looks at me, her eyes filled with worry.

"Something big happening tonight?"

"Something's happening, yes, but it's nothing for you to worry about."

"I'll always worry about you." She kisses me and then wraps her arms around me. I'm not sure I'll ever get fully used to having a woman love and care so damn much about me. It's nice, though, even my stubborn ass can admit that. It's damn fucking nice, and I easily return her hug, holding her tightly against me.

When it's time for us to leave, Sergei and Aleksandr step off the elevator, and this time Grigori is with them. We always assign two guards when Simona and Emily will be left alone, and they always assumed it was just two guys we chose to hang out with them and make sure they were safe until we could get back. They don't realize that they've each been assigned a bodyguard who's under strict orders to protect them with their lives. Grigori's just been officially assigned to Jolene.

I give him a nod as Sergei grabs the laptop with the feed from the security cameras and goes to stand by the other two men. Roman and Danil say their goodbyes as Matvey and Vitaly head for the elevator and I pull Jolene closer. Cupping her face, I kiss her and press her closer, wanting to feel her body against mine. She watched me get ready, she knows the weapons I have on me and she's careful to avoid touching the gun at the small of my back when she wraps her arms around me.

"Don't you dare get hurt," she whispers against my lips.

"Never, baby." I kiss her again, cupping the back of her head. "Don't worry about me. I'll be back before you know it."

"I love you." I hear the crack in her voice and know that she's worried about me. I wish I could tell her this is the last time I'll ever walk out of this place to kill someone, but it would just be a lie, and I'll never lie to her.

"I love you too, *malinkaya*." I give her ass a soft smack and say, "Don't let them kick your ass in that racing game, baby."

Emily hears me and laughs. "We're not going to kick her ass," she says and then points to the three men still awaiting orders. "We're going to kick theirs."

Sergei snorts out a disbelieving laugh. "Like last time?"

"That wasn't fair," Simona says. "We weren't ready. We're ready tonight, and we're going to kick your ass."

We've told the three men to do whatever it takes to keep them calm and happy, so even though it looks like they're in for a night of gaming and pizza, I know the truth of it. They'll be alert every fucking second they're here, and they'll give their lives without a second thought to keep them safe. There's no point in upsetting two pregnant women and the woman I love more than life itself, though, so video games and pizza it is.

Giving her one more kiss, I force myself to let her go and then walk to the elevator and head down with my brothers. We're taking the SUV tonight, and when we're all piled in, Roman drives us in the direction of the Red Viper. The familiar adrenaline rush starts to kick in the closer we get, and by the time Roman pulls over, we're more than ready to kill some fuckers.

Pulling his phone out, Danil sends a quick text to Timofey, checking to make sure the others are in position. We've chosen another location that's unlikely to bring in any calls to the police, and while we wait, we check our weapons.

“They’re here,” Danil says, reading his latest text. “Seven of them, heading our way.”

Vitaly grins and Matvey almost does. We get out and start walking down the alley to cut them off when they round the corner. Like last time, these are seven newly recruited Alessi men who were chosen just for this purpose. I can tell they're new because they blindly walk into the alley like they're the baddest motherfuckers around. A smart man, a man who's been in this business for any length of time and managed to stay alive knows that there could always be someone more dangerous than you waiting around the corner. Staying vigilant means staying alive. Another life lesson these fuckers are going to learn too late. I need a son to pass all these pearls of wisdom down to, and when that thought hits me, I start grinning.

When Alessi's men see us, I can tell by their surprised looks that the last thing they were expecting is to see five Russians, one of them a tatted-up guy with a lip ring grinning about the possibility of becoming a father, but that's exactly what they get.

Our guns are already drawn before they can reach for theirs. We'd agreed beforehand that Matvey and Roman would each get to take two while me and Danil and Vitaly each took out one a piece. It's only fair since they have the closest ties to Alina and are most in need of relieving some anger.

We don't waste time. We fire quick shots to the head, and when they're all dead, Vitaly runs back to bring the SUV closer. Now comes the fun part. The plan was to toss their heads onto Alessi property, so we need seven heads. I'm not squeamish about violence, but that doesn't mean I'm particularly looking forward to decapitating several men in a back alley.

Opening the back, I spread out the tarp and grab the machete we brought while Danil tells Timofey to bring his team. We're taking the heads, but that doesn't mean we're lugging around seven headless bodies in the back of our goddamn SUV. The line has to be drawn somewhere.

Danil takes some photos for David, making sure to get the tattooed hands and then steps out of the way. Gripping the hair of one of the men, I raise the machete and bring it down hard, thankful that at least the blade is sharp, making my job a hell of a lot easier. I work my way through three of them before Matvey holds out his hand. Without a word, I hold the handle of the machete out to him, letting him take over. He goes through the last

four, and it seems like it's damn therapeutic for him because when he comes back over to me, he looks relaxed instead of his usual tense, on-edge self.

Vitaly grabs the heads and lines them up on the tarp. "Well, that's just kind of sweet," he says, eyeing his work. "All together like that, I think they would've appreciated it."

Timofey laughs and waves the truck his men are in closer. They haul the bodies into the back before covering them up. He gets in his car with another one of our men to go back on patrol while the others go to bury the bodies like last time. My brothers and I get in the SUV with our collection of heads and drive to the Alessi mansion. Dominic's made sure to keep his guards away for the next thirty minutes, and they live on enough property to give us privacy while we chuck the heads over their fence.

Parking next to the large, wrought iron fence, we get out and open the back. The heads have been jostled by the drive and when Vitaly sees that his perfect buddy line has been messed up, he lets out a sigh and grips one of the heads by its long, stringy hair.

His eyes light up when he says, "I bet I can throw it the farthest."

"Oh, you're on, brother," I tell him, grabbing my own head.

He tosses his over the fence, and we all watch it soar through the sky. It bounces across the perfectly manicured lawn, rolling to a stop about fifty feet away.

"Not bad," I tell him. "I'm about to beat it, but not a bad try at all."

He laughs and watches me grip the hair tighter before pulling back and catapulting the head with everything I have. It's a beautiful throw, and the head almost looks graceful as it soars over the iron spikes of the fence before sailing through the air and landing a few feet past Vitaly's head.

"Motherfucker," he groans, shaking his head at his defeat.

"All right, my turn," Roman says, grabbing a head.

The other three toss a head, and when it's a tie between me and Danil, we get the remaining two for a tiebreaker throw. Danil takes his last throw, but it hits one of the other heads and bounces off course.

"Well, that's a fucking shame," I say with a laugh.

Vitaly tosses me the last one with a "Heads-up," and as corny as it is, I can't help but laugh as I catch it. This guy didn't have long hair, so I'm forced to hold it more like a football. I pull my arm back and toss it over the fence, laughing when it lands past Danil's.

"All right, let's get the fuck out of here," Roman says, laughing.

Danil gets over his loss quickly and snaps a few photos of the decorated lawn before we all pile back in. Vitaly decides he's hungry, so we go through a drive-thru to kill some time. We're about to go to the Red Viper, but we decided we'd tell David our men took care of things this time and that they called us after the men were killed and that we gave the orders to toss the heads over the fence as a warning to Dominic to stay the fuck out of our area. It'd look too suspicious if we're the only ones to kill and find Alessi's men each and every time. I mean, we're good, but too much of us being at the right spot at the right time and it just becomes unbelievable.

We eat our cheeseburgers in the parking lot while we pass around wet wipes to get most of the blood off our hands and faces. Roman checks in with Sergei and then lets us know that everything looks good.

"He says Jolene is kicking his ass in the racing game."

I smile, proud of my girl and say, "I'm not surprised at all. She's pretty fucking amazing."

"So when are you getting married?" Vitaly asks, digging through the bag for any fries that might've spilled. "I mean, you've been dating for like a week now, so that's gotta be a family record. Shouldn't she already be pregnant with a ring around her finger?"

I laugh and toss a fry at him, but he just catches it and eats it with a grin.

"I'd marry her tomorrow if I thought she'd agree to it."

"Wait until the bruises go away," Matvey says. "She'll hate it if every time she looks at your wedding photos she's reminded of what Sebastian did to her."

"That's a very good point," Vitaly says. "That's a memory you're not going to want to have mixed with your wedding day."

I laugh as my brothers continue to plan out my wedding until it's time for us to go meet David. Danil texts him, letting him know we need to speak, and I'm surprised when he looks back at us and says, "He's at Pink tonight."

"He's been coming in a lot lately," Vitaly says with a groan. "The women say he pays them well and doesn't force the issue if they say no, so at least there's that. I guess he just wants a change, and my club is way nicer than his depressing shithole, and we have steaks."

I laugh, but he's not wrong. Adding food to the menu has been a huge draw for people. Businessmen come in for lunch, and the place is always packed in the evenings. He's created a one-stop destination for men wanting

a good meal, more eye candy than they can imagine, and a fuck in the back if they have the money and the woman is willing. The club is pure profit at this point.

Roman drives us to Pink, and I'm not at all surprised to see a long line out front. It's like this every damn night. I look down, trying to see if the dried blood is painfully obvious against my black shirt. We're all stained with it, but at least our hands and faces are no longer splattered with it.

Vitaly claps me on the back. "Relax, you look beautiful, Lev."

I laugh and run a hand through my hair. "As long as you think so. I'd hate to embarrass you in front of all your employees."

Danil laughs and shakes his head. I can see the dark stains on his black shirt as well, and Matvey's hoodie is probably ruined. On the plus side, I'm pretty sure we'll be given a wide berth once we're inside the club. We bypass the line and nod to the two bouncers on duty before stepping inside. I ignore the women, because I have no desire to see anyone naked except Jolene, and follow Vitaly as he leads us through the crowd and up the stairs to the VIP section. The topless woman who steps aside to let us in gives me a smile that I ignore. They're used to avoiding Roman, Danil, and Matvey, and they need to learn that my name has just been added to that list. I'm officially and permanently off the fucking market, and I couldn't be happier about it.

We make our way to one of the corner tables where David and Aaron are having drinks and watching the nearest pole dancer. The sight of Aaron has me seeing red. I want to add his fucking head to Dominic's yard, but I can't give in to that urge yet. Aaron will die by my hands, but it won't be tonight. Matvey steps up beside me, silently reminding me to keep my temper in check. I give him a quick nod, letting him know I'm okay, and then we all take a seat while Vitaly motions for the waitress to bring us a round of drinks.

"Another fucking attack?" David asks, scrolling through the photos Danil sent him. "Jesus Christ, you cut their heads off?"

Roman shrugs. "They came into our territory and fucked up one of our men. He managed to kill one of them and call for backup. They killed the rest and then called us for further instructions. It seemed an appropriate response."

Vitaly laughs. "Dominic and Antonio are going to wake up to one hell of a surprise."

“I’ll send this update along, but I gotta say, this seems like a personal issue between you and the Alessi family. I’m not so sure it concerns us.”

I laugh in disbelief before I can stop it. “Your club, your entire operation in this city is in our fucking territory. What affects us, affects you. You think Dominic is just going to stop what he’s doing? This is quickly becoming a war, and you’re right in the fucking middle of it. If you think you’re going to come out of it unscathed, you’re in for one hell of a rude awakening.”

“For someone who gets their paycheck from a Bratva, you seem to be very confused about how this all works,” Danil says.

David doesn’t care for that comment. His fingers tighten around his glass and he takes a swallow of whiskey before he speaks, trying to control his temper. Smart man.

“All I’m saying is that the boss may not consider it something that he needs to personally worry about.”

“If he’s as smart as you seem to think he is, then he most definitely will,” I say. “He’ll understand exactly what’s happening, and he’ll see it as the threat it is. You did notice that this attack is closer to your club, right?”

His face pales a bit at that. “He wouldn’t.”

“Can you believe this fucking idiot?” Matvey mutters in Russian. Switching to English, he says, “It’s not just us he’s pissed at. It was your auction that left him feeling humiliated. He blames you just as much as he blames us.”

“That’s ridiculous,” Aaron mutters.

“No, Aaron, that’s just business,” I tell him, explaining it nice and slow. “In his mind, you sided with us, so now you’re his enemy too. He never would’ve let his men come near your club otherwise. He would’ve warned you it was coming. He would’ve asked for your permission to enter your part of the city.”

“Look,” Roman says, “whatever Bratva you’re working for, they don’t run this part of the city. We do. They do business here, business that we benefit from and that we allow to continue.”

“Allow?” David says with a laugh.

“Yes.” Roman leans forward. “Business that my brothers and I fucking allow. We were fine staying on the sidelines, but the Barinov Bratva is gone, and we’re stepping in. You need to let your boss know that. He’ll know what’s expected of him.”

“I want to speak to your man, the one who got jumped tonight,” David says. “If I’m going to be making a phone call later, then I want all the fucking details.”

“He’s getting checked by our doctor right now,” I say, the lie falling easily off my tongue.

“Bring him when it’s done,” David says, and I nod, already regretting what I’m going to have to do.

My brothers and I stand, leaving David and Aaron to their drinks. I toss back the shot the waitress hands me as we walk away.

“Fucking hell,” Vitaly groans in Russian. “We really should’ve seen that one coming.”

“Timofey is not going to like this,” Danil says, shaking his head and giving a soft laugh.

“It’s not Timofey you need to worry about,” Matvey says, nodding his head to where Mila is busy filling drink orders.

“God, she’s gonna be so pissed at me,” I say with a groan. Walking over to the bar, I ask her to give me a bottle of our best vodka. She hands it over without question. I hold it up and say, “Just remember how much you like me, Mila.”

She raises a brow and rests a hand on her hip. “Should I be worried?”

“No, nothing to worry about,” I assure her. I mean, it’s not like I’m going to kill her husband or anything. He just won’t be near as pretty when I’m done with him. She’s really going to hate that.

When I step away from the bar, Vitaly puts his phone away. “He’s on his way, going to meet us near the back entrance.”

There was never any doubt about who was going to be assigned this job. I’m the fighter, the one who knows exactly where to hit a guy to make it look terrible while causing the least amount of damage. It’s going to hurt like a motherfucker, but nothing will be permanent.

When Timofey pulls up, we let him in through the back. He follows me to one of the private rooms, and when we step into the room with mirrored walls, a dancer’s pole, and a leather couch, I try not to think about how much DNA is already in this room. We have professional cleaners that come in on a regular basis, but they haven’t been here today.

I hand him the bottle. “Drink this.”

He looks between the five of us. “Am I being promoted or demoted?”

Vitaly laughs. “Neither. David wants to meet the man who got jumped by Alessi’s men.”

Timofey opens the bottle and takes a long drink. Wiping the back of his hand across his mouth when he’s done, he looks at me and says, “Well, let’s fucking get this over with.”

I laugh and smack his shoulder. This is why he’s one of our top men. Balls of fucking steel and willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. We could’ve picked someone else for this, but we all trust Timofey to take this and not hold a grudge and to lie convincingly to David and Aaron. We can’t take any chances of this getting fucked up.

I wait for him to take another drink before passing the bottle to Vitaly, and then he steps into the middle of the room to face me.

“Mila really loves my handsome face,” he tells me. “Try not to fuck it up too much. I’d like to get laid later on tonight.”

“I’ll do my best,” I tell him, raising my fists and punching him in the cheek hard enough to make it swell and bruise. I follow it up with a punch to the eye, making sure to mainly hit his eyebrow. It splits for me, just like I hoped it would.

“Is that all you got?” Timofey says, giving me a grin. “Mila hits me harder than that when I leave the toilet seat up.”

I’m laughing too hard to deliver the next punch while I hear Matvey mutter, “Balls of fucking steel.”

They’re passing the bottle around behind us, watching Timofey take the beating he most definitely does not deserve, but life is sometimes unfair like that. When he looks bad enough to be believable, I pat him on the back.

“Sorry, man. Tell Mila nothing’s permanent and she’ll get her pretty husband back once the bruising fades.”

He laughs and swipes a hand over his bloody face. “Don’t let her fool you. She fucking loves scars.”

“I can hit you again if you want,” I offer.

“I’ll pass,” he says, still grinning as he grabs the bottle of vodka again. He drinks just enough to take the edge off, knowing we need him sharp when he talks to David.

“Okay, let’s do this,” Danil says. “You were doing your rounds and spotted Alessi’s men. They saw you, attacked first, you called for backup, and then you killed them all.”

“Got it,” Timofey says, handing the bottle to Vitaly before using the bottom of his T-shirt to wipe away most of the blood.

When we leave the back room and come out from the hallway and into the main room, Mila immediately cuts her eyes to us, like she’s been waiting and watching this whole time. I meet her angry gaze, but when I give a soft shake of my head, she stays put behind the bar. Her eyes widen and then harden when she sees what I’ve done to her husband. He looks at her, smiles, even though his teeth are still coated in blood, and gives her a wink with the eye that I didn’t punch.

Mila, ever the professional and tough ass, blows him a kiss and then gets back to serving drinks. God, we need to give her a raise. Timofey stays behind me and between Danil and Roman as we make our way back up to David. Since we don’t have tits, no one’s really paying any attention to us, and we’re able to get to the VIP section without turning any heads.

“This is Timofey,” Vitaly tells him, waving a hand at the bloodied man.

We all sit down again while David starts asking questions. Timofey sticks to the story we told him, making it clear that Alessi’s men attacked first. When David and Aaron are satisfied, we all stand to go.

“I’ll be in touch,” David says, and then he looks at me and grins. “How’s Sebastian’s sister doing?”

My blood runs cold at the memory of that night, the way he’d pulled her hair and treated her like she was nothing but garbage. “She’s good. It pissed Sebastian off when he saw me with her.” I force myself to laugh, like it doesn’t hurt me at all to talk about the woman I love like this. “Seeing the look on his face was worth every penny I spent on her.”

David laughs. “Bets are coming in like crazy for your fight with him.”

“Glad to hear it,” I say, not giving the slightest fuck how much money they make off me. All I care about is getting back to Jolene. I’ve never had anyone waiting at home for me before, and I like it way more than I ever thought I would.

Chapter 13

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Jolene

The next few days pass by quickly, and for the first time in my life, I want to stop time. I want to pause the damn clock and stay in this perfect moment forever. I no longer spend my days dreaming about the life I wish I had, because I'm already living it, and as great as it is, it's also scary as fuck. Before I had nothing, so I had nothing to lose. But now? Now I have everything to lose, and how the hell do you ever go back to a life of pain when you've been allowed a glimpse of how damn beautiful it can be?

It would be impossible.

Lev finds me on the terrace, sitting on the swing that I can't help but think of as ours. He's been busy with his brothers today, and I know they've just had a phone call with Dominic. Lev explained how the Alessi family is working with them to take down the Lebedev Bratva, and I'm worried. I was worried enough about Lev when I just knew him as the unbeatable underground fighter, but now I know his perfect ass is involved in so many more dangerous things.

He kisses my furrowed brow. "What's wrong, *malinkaya*?"

"I just worry about you."

He smiles and puts me in his lap, wrapping his arms around me and shielding me from the wind that's growing colder as the sun sets.

"Nothing to worry about. My brothers and I have been doing this for a very long time."

"But it's so dangerous. What if you get hurt?"

He kisses my shoulder. "Then it'll be your turn to play nursemaid, except this time I want to see you in a really skimpy nurse's uniform. I

think that would go a long way in ensuring a full recovery. In fact,” he says, nibbling his way up my neck, “it kind of makes me want to get hurt a little bit just so you can nurse me back to health.”

“Don’t say that.” I bring a hand up so I can run my fingers through his hair. “I couldn’t handle anything happening to you.”

His tongue runs along my earlobe, the heat of his breath a sharp contrast to the cold wind blowing around us. “That makes two of us, *malinkaya*. If anything happened to you, I wouldn’t recover from it. You’re my weakness now, and that just means I need to be even more vigilant about keeping you safe. You’re far too precious to me to risk. If you’re not by my side, then I want you safely in this penthouse. If you need to leave and I can’t go with you, then I’ll make sure you have a bodyguard.”

“Lev,” I start to say, but he cuts me off.

“I’m afraid this is nonnegotiable. I can’t give you a normal life, baby, but I can keep you safe and I can love you better than anyone else ever could.”

I smile and turn my head so I can kiss him. “Normal lives are overrated.”

He gives a soft laugh and cups my face. “They are,” he agrees.

“Can you keep giving me lessons?”

“You don’t need to know how to protect yourself. That’s what you have me for.”

“I know, but it was fun.”

He smiles and runs his thumb over my bottom lip. It’s so close to being fully healed, and I can’t wait.

“You did look sexy as hell throwing punches at me.”

“Yeah, I’m sure that’s exactly how I looked,” I say with a laugh. “Especially that first night when I had a big taco sauce stain on my hoodie.”

“Is that what that was?” he asks with a laugh. “I wondered.”

“I ate some tacos in the truck while I waited for your fight to get over.”

He throws his head back and laughs. “God, you’re such a little stalker. You even brought food.”

I shrug, refusing to be embarrassed for anything that led me to this moment. “I was hungry.”

He stands up, easily taking me with him. “Come on, baby. Let’s go see if you can kick my ass yet.”

Turns out I cannot kick Lev's ass. He's watching me like a hawk, making sure I don't exert myself too much, and when I try to land a punch and then wince when it makes my lower back hurt from where Sebastian kicked me, Lev holds up his hands.

"No more," he says, and his tone makes it clear that nothing I can say or do will change his mind. When he sees my scowl, he kisses my forehead. "When you're feeling better, we can work out anytime you want. I'll help you with the weights, put you on the treadmill, spar with you, whatever you want, but you just winced, *malinkaya*. We're done for the day."

"Fine." I don't bother arguing. I know that look on his face. It's the *I'm not budging* look, and even though he looks fucking adorable when he's being stubborn, I know there's no winning this one. "Can I at least watch you work out? I mean, there's got to be some perks to dating Lev Melnikov. I want an exclusive, up-close-and-personal view of you getting all sweaty."

He laughs and leans down to kiss me. "You want me to give you a show, baby?"

"Yes, I do. I really, really do."

Pulling a moan from me when he gives my top lip a suck, he smiles and takes a step back. Making sure I'm okay first, he grabs me a bottle of water and then pulls one of the chairs over to where I'm still standing.

"Drink, baby, and relax."

I take the bottle and sit down, but I get sidetracked when he raises an arm and grips his T-shirt, pulling it over his head in one smooth motion that leaves me close to drooling. How does he make everything look so damn sexy? He tosses the shirt at me with a wink, and I'm not above taking it and giving it a sniff. When he sees it, he laughs and shakes his head.

"You're crazy, baby."

"About you," I say, and he gives me the sweetest smile before grabbing some gloves and walking to the punching bag.

I take a drink and settle back in the chair for one hell of a show. As soon as Lev starts punching, I can't take my eyes off him. I wasn't lying when I'd told him I thought he was graceful when he fought. He truly is. His powerful build makes it seem like he wouldn't be able to move all that quickly, but Lev is ridiculously fast and light on his feet.

I lose track of time as I watch him. He doesn't slow down or grow tired. He just keeps punching, shaking the chain the bag is hanging from with every hit, and soon my heart is racing and my pussy is flat-out aching with

need. With him distracted, I slowly slip one hand lower, unable to resist the sight of my boyfriend glistening with sweat, muscles taut and every inch of him hard and defined.

The soles of my feet are on the chair with my thighs together, hiding my hand from view as I snake it into my pants and under my panties. I'm not surprised in the slightest to find myself dripping wet. My eyes stay glued to his beautiful body as I sink two fingers inside myself. I suck my bottom lip, trying like hell to keep silent while I bring my wet fingers to my clit and start to rub. Drops of sweat drip down Lev's chest and chiseled abs, and I can already feel the orgasm building deep inside me.

I'm careful to not make a noise, but somehow he can sense what's happening. He stops punching and turns those light blue eyes on me, but I'm too far gone to stop what I'm doing. His eyes go dark as he runs them over me, and when he sees my hand moving in my pants, he gives me the sexiest goddamn smirk and starts to slowly walk towards me.

"Well, well, well," he says, resting his hands on the arms of the chair and leaning closer. "What are you up to, *malinkaya*?"

My response is a soft moan as I rub my clit harder. He leans closer, lightly grazing his lips along my forehead as he slowly kisses down my face. Drops of sweat fall on me, and he lets out a soft laugh when I turn my head and lick his cheek, wanting to fill my mouth with the salty taste.

"You trying to come without me, baby? You know that's not allowed."

"It's not?" My voice is breathless and barely more than a whisper.

"No, it's not." He nibbles along my jawline. "I don't ever want you coming without me."

"You were in the room," I point out.

He laughs and brings his lips to mine. "You wanted to come, baby, so come." Moving his hands, he grips the sides of my yoga pants and yanks them down, leaving me bare with my fingers and pussy on full display. He growls something in Russian when I start to rub my clit in circles. I'm so wet that I know I'm going to leave a wet spot on the chair, but I'm long past caring about anything besides my need to come. Grabbing my knees, he spreads my legs wider and kneels in front of me. His eyes stay locked on my fingers as he kisses a slow trail down my thigh.

"So fucking beautiful," he murmurs against my skin. His hands slide down my legs, and when he spreads me even more, I widen my eyes, and

I'm just about to start feeling embarrassed when he lowers his head and runs his tongue up my soaked slit.

He lifts his eyes to mine. "Don't get shy with me, *malinkaya*. I can't bear it. Never with me. I love you, and every part of this perfect body is mine. I don't ever want you to hide it from me."

Soft kisses run up my slit before he groans and runs his tongue over the birthmark he can't seem to get enough of.

"Keep going," he growls against my skin. "Keep working that sloppy wet cunt, baby. Let me see how much you liked watching me. You liked it so goddamn much you couldn't keep your greedy little fingers out of your pussy."

"Yes," I moan, pressing harder against my clit and working myself in fast, tight circles.

"Did you used to watch me fight and then go home and fuck yourself?"

His words send heated breaths against my pussy, pulling another moan from me as I rock my hips. "Yes," I admit, remembering all the times I'd fucked myself thinking about the man who's right now kneeling in front of me and running his tongue along my sensitive folds.

"I'm sorry I wasn't there when you needed me, *malinkaya*, but I'm here now, and I'm never leaving. Now let me see you come."

I'm close. I'm so fucking close, and when he slides two fingers into me and runs his tongue over my fingers, letting me feel him around my clit, I moan his name and buck up against him, desperate to feel his mouth on me. He groans and keeps finger-fucking me, filling the space around us with the vulgar sounds of my wet pussy as he slides his tongue under my fingers, forcing them aside so he can take over. Wrapping his lips around me, he sucks hard, forcing an orgasm onto me, leaving me shaking and fisting his sweaty hair as I fall apart under his skilled touch.

"Lev," I moan, riding the line between pain and pleasure. He pulls back, rimming my clit as aftershocks run through me and I sink deeper into the chair, boneless and spent. I'm still trying to get my breathing under control when he slowly slides his fingers out of me and then slowly licks up the mess I've made all over myself. He cleans me like he's savoring every damn taste, and when he meets my eyes again, his are dark and filled with a lust that has me sucking in a quick breath. He's barely hanging on, barely keeping himself in check, and when he says, "Knees on the chair and turn

around,” I don’t waste any time. I scurry into position and look over my shoulder, wanting to see him.

He makes quick work of his pants, needing to be inside me too badly to take it slow. He’s rock hard and ready for me, and when he grips my hips in his powerful hands, a shiver of excitement runs through me. I know what’s coming, and I can’t fucking wait. My fingers dig into the back of the chair when I feel the head of his cock at my slit. His piercing slips past my pussy lips before I feel the first barbell. I hiss out a breath as he spreads me wide, letting me feel each piercing as they drag along my inner wall. I count them in my head, and when I get to six, I let out a whimper and drop my head as I try to push back against him. He tightens his grip on me and lets out a soft laugh.

“This little cunt is always so fucking eager.” The ragged sound of his voice is more of a growl than anything else, and it sends another shiver of pleasure through me at the sound of it. “I told you I was going to make you my little slut.” He gives me another inch, sliding in the seventh piercing. “Are you ever going to be like this for anyone else?”

“No,” I quickly say, the very idea of it making me shake my head in protest. “Never.”

“Good fucking girl,” he praises, “because I will kill anyone who ever dares to put their hands on what’s mine.”

Reaching a hand around, he skims his finger over my aching clit. “This pussy only weeps for me, *malinkaya*.”

“Yes, fuck yes,” I moan as he gives me the last piercing and rubs my clit at the same time. He’s buried inside me, hips pressed firmly against my ass, so deep I swear I can feel him in my goddamn stomach, and the sensation has me gasping for breath while I desperately try to grind against him. His fingers dig in harder, holding me firmly in place.

“*I’m the one fucking you*,” he says, keeping me still and reminding me who’s in control as he slowly slides out of me before slamming back in with a feral-sounding groan. “You’re so tight, baby, and so fucking wet.”

His piercings drag along my pussy, hitting my G-spot and all the hidden nerve endings that I never even knew existed until Lev slid his fucking humongous cock into me. He’s ruined me in the best way possible. No other man could ever compare, and as I clench the chair so tightly my knuckles ache and arch my ass up for him even more, I know it will always be Lev or

nothing for me. It's always been him. I was lost to him a long time ago, and there's no changing it.

His hand lands on top of mine, threading our fingers together seconds before I feel his sweaty, muscled chest meet my back. He molds his body to mine and kisses my neck. His tongue and teeth run over my sensitive skin as his fingers stay between my legs, pinching and rolling my clit while his thrusts become harder.

"Mine," he growls against the crook of my neck. "Every part of you is mine, *malinkaya*."

"Lev," I beg, knowing I'm only seconds away.

"That's my good girl. Come on the cock that owns this sweet cunt."

His words send me over the edge, and when I start to scream, he presses his mouth to mine, muffling it as he fucks me harder. When my clit can't take any more, he cups my face, smearing my skin with my arousal. His tongue runs along mine, delving deep until he groans and buries himself as deeply as he can. Aftershocks run through me with every pulse of his cock, and when he's finally empty, he smiles against my lips and carefully lifts me up so he can sit in the chair with me on his lap, his cock still nestled inside me. I collapse against his chest as he lazily drags a hand up my body to cup one of my breasts.

"You are perfect," he murmurs against my cheek before running his tongue over my wet skin, lapping up the taste of me like he'll never be able to get enough. "So fucking perfect."

"We should definitely work out together more often."

He laughs and wraps his arms around me. "When you're feeling better, you can get on one of the treadmills naked for me, and I can jerk off while you run." He nips at my earlobe. "Fair is fair, after all."

I laugh and shake my head. "No way in hell am I running naked in front of you."

"Why the hell not? You would look so goddamn sexy."

"I'm so glad you think so, but I'm still not doing it." My face heats up at the very idea of it. I've never been completely comfortable in my own skin, and it's a miracle that he's made me feel so at ease with him that I'm able to do things like masturbate in front of him and then bend over a chair so he can fuck me, but running naked is probably never going to happen. If there's going to be a line, it feels like that's a good place to put it.

“We’ll see,” is all he says as he kisses my cheek and runs his thumb over my nipple. “As much as I love to stay buried inside you, baby, we should probably get up. Matvey’s going to be coming in here soon for his nightly workout.”

That gets my attention. I jump from his lap, wincing when his cock slips out of me. My body has yet to get used to his size, so more often than not, my pussy is sore. I’ve become a little addicted to the ache between my legs, though, and I’m not complaining. Holding my pants up, he helps me get dressed before tucking himself away.

“Come on, baby. Let’s grab some food and go to bed.”

“You’re tired?”

He gives me a wink. “Not in the slightest.”

* * *

The day of the fight has me feeling anxious and antsy all damn day. Lev, on the other hand, seems completely relaxed. He laughs with his brothers, fucks me like he doesn’t have a care in the world beyond trying to get as deeply inside me as humanly possible, and even gets seconds at supper when I can barely manage to hold down anything.

“Stop worrying, *malinkaya*,” he says, kissing my cheek. “It’s insulting.”

“I can’t help but worry about you, and I don’t trust my brother at all.”

“It’ll be fine. I’m used to fighting men who can’t be trusted to fight fairly.”

Vitaly smacks my shoulder lightly on his way to the fridge. “Don’t worry, little sis, your man can take care of himself.” He laughs while I smile at being called his little sister. “He’s one tough son of a bitch.”

“He is,” Danil agrees. “I told you he taught me how to fight when we were younger. No one ever picked on me again.” He turns to Lev and shakes his head with a smile. “Your training sessions were grueling. It was more of the *If you survive this, you’re going to be one hell of a fighter* method of teaching.”

“I don’t think that’s the same method he’s using on me,” I say with a laugh.

Lev winks at me. “Definitely not the same.”

We hang out with his family until it's almost time to go. Before we leave, Lev pulls me upstairs and into our bedroom, closing the door and pressing me up against it.

"You don't have to come tonight." He cups my face, light blue eyes searching mine. "I understand if you've changed your mind."

"I want to go. No way in hell could I stay here without knowing what's going on. I'll go crazy, and I want to see this. I've watched all your fights, Lev, since your very first one at the warehouse, and I'm not about to miss this one."

"This one won't be the same," he warns, "and you know it."

"No, but I still want to see it. I deserve to see it after what he did to me."

He sighs and rests his forehead against mine. "Promise me you won't think differently of me after this, *malinkaya*. I won't be able to stand it if you look at me like I'm a monster for killing your brother."

I cup his face and run my finger over his lip ring. "I would never. He's the monster, Lev. Not you. *Never* you."

He gives me a sad smile as he lets out a soft huff of air. "I'm already a monster. I became one long ago, but never to you, baby."

Closing the distance, I kiss him slowly, hoping he can feel in my touch how much I don't care about that side of him. It's a part of him, yes, but I still love every single bit of this man. I don't care about the crimes he's committed or the violence he's done. Maybe I should, but I trust that there was a reason for it. I know him well enough to know who he really is, and that's good enough for me. I'm not so blind and naive that I think he'll leave a Bratva he runs with his brothers to live a normal, quiet life in the suburbs with me. Loving Lev means joining him as he is in the dangerous world he lives in, and I'm more than happy to do it, because I'll always choose him, no matter what.

"You're far too good for me," he whispers against my lips.

I laugh and run the backs of my fingers along his cheek. He'd taken his stitches out earlier, stubbornly refusing to go to a doctor to do it, and his eyebrow is still red and a little swollen. I lightly drag my fingers under it.

"Be careful he doesn't punch you there."

He smiles and grabs my hand, gently kissing the palm. "I won't let him hit me there, baby."

I know we need to leave in just a couple of minutes, but I also know that once we get there it's going to be packed and crazy and that I'm still just

supposed to be the girl he bought to piss off Sebastian, so I kiss him again and say, “I love you, Lev. Do whatever you have to do tonight to win this damn fight. Keep yourself safe for me, because I can’t lose you.”

The very idea of something happening to him has my throat feeling tight. He kisses me slowly, running his fingers through my hair before cupping the back of my head. It’s a sweet kiss, a soft, slow kiss, and it leaves me wanting more.

“I love you too, *malinkaya*, and as soon as I kill your brother for hurting you, I’m going to fuck you until the goddamn sun comes up.”

“Damn,” I whisper, making him smile and gently bite my upper lip.

“Time to go.” He gives me one more quick kiss and then reluctantly pulls back. He eyes the shirt I’m wearing. “Grab a hoodie, baby. It’s chilly tonight.”

I smile and laugh as I walk to the closet. He’s about to go and beat my brother to death in front of a huge crowd of people where there’s a significant amount of money on the table, and the only thing he’s worried about is that I might be chilly on the back of his bike.

Grabbing my red hoodie, I pull it on, laughing when he gives me a smile and says, “Good girl,” before threading his fingers through mine and leading me back downstairs.

Vitaly and Matvey are ready and waiting. Roman and Danil are staying at the penthouse with their wives, but they all come over to wish Lev luck. Emily and Simona give us both hugs, and I know they’re worried about Lev, too, but we all know what a good fighter he is. That knowledge isn’t going to lower my blood pressure, though, while I watch the fight.

Like last time, Lev and I take his motorcycle while Matvey and Vitaly follow behind. I squeeze him a little tighter on the way, and when he pulls up in front of the warehouse, I’m stunned. The place is more packed than I’ve ever seen it. Cars and trucks are parked in every available spot, and the rest are crammed in along the street and behind the building. There’s an empty area near the entrance reserved for Lev, though, and he pulls into it, leaving room for Matvey’s Camaro.

Lev unhooks my strap and pulls my helmet off before removing his. He sees my wide-eyed expression and gives me a reassuring smile.

“It’s just a fight like any other, *malinkaya*. This one will just last a bit longer.”

“There are so many people. Why haven’t the police shown up?”

“Because David has friends in very high places. Don’t forget Emily’s dad is the mayor, and he’s not the only government worker who’s bought a woman from David.”

“That’s insane,” I say, barely able to comprehend the level of corruption going on in the city I’ve lived in my entire life.

“Bad men are everywhere, little one.” He gives me a wink. “Better stay extra close to me.”

I smile as he wraps an arm around me and we both turn to see Matvey pull in next to us. When he steps out and I see the red hoodie he’s thrown on over the long-sleeve tee he was wearing earlier, I give him a very gentle nudge with my elbow and say, “Twinsies.”

He’s so surprised he barks out a quick laugh before he can stop it, and it’s the most relaxed I’ve ever seen him. He looks so much younger when he’s not scowling, but as quickly as the laugh happens, it ends. A pained look crosses his face, like he feels guilty for even those few seconds of laughter. Vitaly squeezes my shoulder and leans closer so only I can hear.

“Thanks for making him laugh, even if it was for just a second.” He turns his head to the door and sighs. “We’re going to have to walk through the wall of groupies.”

I look over and mirror his sigh. There’s an even bigger group of half-naked women than usual, and they’re all looking at Lev with serious fuck-me eyes.

“Don’t worry about them,” Vitaly says. “My brother loves you, and in case you haven’t noticed the Melnikov brothers fall hard when they do fall.”

I smile up at him, appreciating what he’s doing. “Well, I guess that means you’ll have your pick tonight.”

“As if,” he says with a laugh. “They’re here for Lev, and I’m not going to be the brother they settle for because they can’t have him. I do have my pride, Jolene.”

I’m still laughing when Lev pulls me back into his arms. “Okay, baby. You ready?”

“As ready as I’ll ever be.”

“You’re going to be right next to me, and then you’re going to stay glued to Vitaly and Matvey. Don’t leave their side at all, not even for a second.”

I pat his chest and smile. “I won’t. I promise.”

Satisfied I'm telling the truth, he wraps an arm around me before the four of us walk to the entrance. The groupies start squealing and jumping up and down as they clap, and I roll my eyes and grit my teeth. Lev squeezes my shoulder and kisses the top of my head, ignoring all of them as we walk by.

I'm used to being on the other side of the warehouse, and it feels odd to be on the side that I've always stared at, spying on him from the shadows. Lev and his brothers carve a path for us, and when I see the men in suits standing near the chain-link fence, my body stiffens at the sight of David and Aaron. It's the first time I've seen them since the night my brother sold me to them, and the memories hit me harder than I thought they would, especially when Aaron gives me a smirk.

Lev feels me stiffen and immediately stops, stepping in front of me so I'm hidden from their view. He hooks a finger under my chin, tilting my face up to his. He studies me and then leans closer so I can hear him over the crowd that's now chanting his name.

"You are safe with me, *malinkaya*, and I promise you those men are going to die as soon as we find Alina. I'm going to be the one who takes Aaron out, and I'm going to enjoy every fucking second of it. They will never hurt you again."

I nod before he kisses my forehead. When he's sure I'm okay, he turns back around, pulling me closer as we close the distance to the men in suits. I don't recognize the others, but if they're with David, then they're no one I want to get to know.

"Lev, you ready for tonight?" David asks, giving him a big smile. "We have a lot riding on it."

"I'm sure you do," Lev says, not sounding near as thrilled.

Vitaly comes to stand on my other side while Matvey comes up behind me. I'm completely surrounded by them, and I know that was the plan all along. David runs his eyes over me and gives a soft laugh.

"She looks better when her face isn't busted up. Guess she was worth the price tag after all."

I feel Lev's entire demeanor change, and I'm not the only one. Matvey says something low and in Russian before Lev gives a barely noticeable nod and exhales.

"She was definitely worth the price tag," Lev says, bringing his hand to the back of my neck. His thumb caresses my skin, comforting me like only

he can. “Hear anything new?”

David smiles and shakes his head. “Nothing since you last asked. He’s aware of what’s going on, and I’m giving him daily updates.” He looks towards the circle where the fight will take place. “He’s very interested in this fight and bet a lot of money on it, so don’t lose.” He laughs but Lev doesn’t join in.

“I never fucking lose.”

Again I’m struck by the lack of cocky-jackass vibes. If my brother were as good of a fighter as Lev, my god, he’d probably have little statues made of himself so he could pass them out to his groupies. He’d be completely insufferable, and I’m so fucking glad that Lev isn’t like that. Even with the fight about to start, he’s so damn calm. If I was on the other side of this warehouse right now, I know exactly what Sebastian would be doing. I’d be getting yelled at while he guzzles sports drinks and protein bars like it will magically make him able to kick the one ass he’ll never be able to kick. I’m so glad I’ll never have to stand over there again.

The crowd starts yelling, and we all turn to see my brother walk into the chain-linked ring. He’s shirtless with black cargo pants and black boots, and he’s looking right at me when he spits on the ground and flips me off.

Yeah, the feeling’s mutual, jackass.

Lev growls something in Russian and then pulls his shirt off, handing it to me as he cups the back of my head and pulls me close. Again, he angles his body so David and Aaron can’t see. His lips find mine, kissing me hard and deep even if it is far too quick.

“I love you, *malinkaya*,” he whispers.

“I love you too. Be careful.”

He pulls back and gives me a wink. “Always, baby.”

Scooting me between his brothers, he gives me one more wink and then steps into the ring. I clutch his shirt, holding it tightly against me, letting his cologne fill my lungs and comfort me.

“He’s going to be fine,” Vitaly says, nudging my shoulder gently.

“He’s been fighting since we were kids,” Matvey adds. “Your brother doesn’t stand a chance in hell.”

I nod, knowing they’re right, because having Lev not be the winner of this fight is not a fucking option. I watch the man I’ve fallen completely in love with walk towards my brother, knowing I’m about to watch him kill a man.

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Chapter 14

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Lev

Before I reach Sebastian, I allow myself one last look at Jolene. She's standing between my brothers, looking so fucking small next to them. She's clutching my shirt and staring right at me. She gives me a smile and a quick wave when I wink at her. I love that woman so fucking much, and it takes everything I have to force my attention away from her so I can focus on killing her brother. I can't afford to be distracted tonight.

I close the distance to Sebastian. He's looking even more pissed off than usual. Good, that'll help him stay alive a little bit longer. I'd hate for this to be over too quickly. I think about the night I found Jolene at the Red Viper, her terrified, beaten face, the bruises that covered her body, the fucking knowledge that there was already a buyer lined up and that if I hadn't found her right when I did she would've already been taken somewhere else and some other fucker would've had his hands on her. I let the rage run through me when I think about someone else being Jolene's first. She is *mine*. She was always meant to be mine, and this fucker is going to die for daring to lay a hand on her, for trying to take her from me, and for terrorizing her all these years.

I hear chains behind me, and I don't bother turning around to look. I know what they're doing without having to see it, but the quick glimmer of surprise in Sebastian's eyes makes it clear he has no idea what's going on.

I smirk and watch his every move as I slowly circle around him. "They're locking us in, just in case you get scared and try to run. One of us won't be walking out of here tonight. The crowd won't allow it."

"I'm not going to fucking run." He watches me, turning so he can keep me in front of him. "I'm going to fucking kill you, and then I'm going to

kill my murdering bitch of a sister.”

“You can’t seriously blame her for the death of your mother. That’s fucking ridiculous, even for a dumbass like you.”

His eyes narrow at the insult, but he doesn’t try to throw a punch. “If she’d never been born, then my mom would still be alive.”

“Maybe, or maybe she would’ve died some other way.” I give a shrug. “I mean, when it’s your time it’s your time, right? You’ll be joining her soon enough, though, so I guess you’ll get your answers one way or another.”

“I wouldn’t be so confident if I were you.” He brings his fists up, preparing to protect his face.

“I’ve been fighting bastards since I was a little boy. You’re no different than the rest of them. Have you ever beaten a man to death, Sebastian?”

I can tell he wants to lie, but I can also see it on his face that he knows I’d know immediately, so he wisely keeps his mouth shut.

“I didn’t think so. I’ve done it many times over the years. I can make it fast or I can make it slow. For you, I’m going to make it very slow. I’m going to take my time for what you did to Jolene.”

He laughs, but it sounds more forced than natural. “I hope she was at least a good fuck because it’s the last one you’re ever going to have.”

“She is the last one I’m ever going to have, and since you’re about to die, I might as well tell you that I’m going to be marrying your sister, and just so you can die a little bit happier, she’s most likely already carrying my baby. The Rousseau name dies with you. She’s a Melnikov now.”

When he lunges for me, I’m ready for it. Sebastian’s always let his emotions take over in a fight, and it makes him sloppy and predictable. I block his first punch and return it with a sharp hit to his ribs. The crowd goes fucking crazy around us, but I can barely hear them. I’m too focused on the man who’s trying like hell to kill me.

The next several minutes are spent blocking each other’s hits and landing a few here and there. Sebastian’s strong, but his endurance has never been all that great. His breathing grows more ragged with each passing minute, but his adrenaline and anger are keeping him going.

“Your stamina sucks,” I tell him. “Of course your groupies already know that, don’t they?”

He doesn’t laugh at my joke, just lets out an angry yell and tries to hit me with a fast sequence that he’s used many times before. I block them and

then land a solid hit to his jaw that forces him back a few steps. He comes right back at me, putting everything he has into it. This isn't a boxing match. We aren't wearing gloves, and no one is going to ring a bell and force us to take a break. We're going to beat the hell out of one another until one of us stops breathing.

My hands ache, and when I give him another hard punch to the face, I feel the skin split along my knuckles. There's nothing to be done about it, though, so I keep hitting and blocking and right when I'm about to land a punch that will bring him to his knees, he reaches down and then comes back up. The sharp sting has me flinching and taking a step back. The slice along my bicep is deep enough to bleed like a motherfucker, but not so deep that I can't keep fighting. I look at the knife in Sebastian's hand as my rage rises to a whole new level.

"You fucking pulled a knife on me?" I yell at him, so fucking pissed I can barely form the words. "You motherfucking pussy!"

He grips the knife tighter and tries to lunge for me, but I dodge it and punch him hard in the stomach, forcing him to bend over as he tries to catch his breath. When I step closer, he scurries away while wildly swinging the knife around.

"You think you're the first jackass to bring a knife to a fistfight?"

The crowd is working itself into a frenzy now. I can hear the chain-link fence rattle around us as they scream and shake it, wanting to see more blood.

"You're not going to win this, not even with your little blade. You're going to die by my hands in front of all these people, and they're all going to know that you died like a fucking coward."

"Fuck you!" he yells, running towards me.

I welcome it. I'm tired of fucking around with this. I'm ready for it to be over. I'm ready to take my woman and get the fuck out of here. I block the stab he tries to give me, but this time I grab his arm, twisting his wrist so he has no choice but to let go of the weapon. He drops it, and I release the pressure instead of breaking his arm. I'm not going to beat a man to death who can't punch me back. He may be a little bitch, but that's not how I do things.

Tossing the knife aside, I wait for him to put his hands back up and then I start punching. He gets a few hits in, but even with the cut he gave me, he doesn't stand a chance. The next punch I throw busts his lip, making me

smile as I hit him everywhere he hit her, except I do it harder because I want him to hurt as much as possible before he dies. I feel his nose collapse under my fist and hear the crack of his ribs breaking. He stumbles on his feet, trying like hell to stay upright, but one more punch to the face sends him to his ass.

As soon as he hits the ground, he knows it's over. I can see it in his eyes, first the shock and then the rage as he gets one last burst of adrenaline—his body's last feeble attempt to save itself. It doesn't work. It never does. Like all the other men before him, I watch that look in his eyes turn to fear when I lower myself down and start punching. It's like I'm twenty years old again, beating my father to death.

Even after Sebastian passes out, I don't stop. I'm not stopping until this is over. I don't ever want to have to worry about this bastard hurting Jolene again. When I'm sure he's dead, I sit back, breathing heavily and covered in blood with two fists that I doubt I'll be able to use tomorrow. I don't notice the crowd has swarmed until it's too late. I barely have time to get on my feet before they're slapping me on the back and cheering my name.

I look in the direction of where I know my brothers were, but I can't see anything. When I feel a hand run down my chest, I look down and see red-painted nails that I don't recognize. Feeling like Matvey, I roughly grab her wrist and toss it aside, yelling, "Get your fucking hands off me."

Pushing my way through the crowd, I don't feel the tightness in my chest ease until I see Vitaly's face and Jolene's right next to his. It takes me a second to realize that he's carrying her piggyback style with Matvey right behind them. Her hazel eyes scan the crowd, desperately trying to catch sight of me, and as soon as she sees me, the tension leaves her face and she gives me the biggest fucking smile. She says something to Vitaly, who starts pushing harder against the crowd. As soon as he's in front of me, he turns so I can grab her off his back.

"Thanks, brother," I tell him, taking Jolene and wrapping my arms around her, breathing easier with the feel of her body against mine. She cups my face, running her eyes over me to make sure I'm okay before pressing her lips to mine. I'd been worried about her watching the fight, but I shouldn't have been. She's strong, and she's been through so much shit in her life. Seeing her brother die was closure for her, a monster that was slayed to keep her safe. It doesn't matter that it was another monster doing the killing.

The crowd pushes around us, but my brothers keep them from getting too close while Jolene kisses me like she'll never be able to get enough. Her tongue runs over my lip ring before she gives it a soft suck. I'm already hard and straining at my jeans, and my need to be inside her takes over everything else.

"Fuck," I growl, pulling back and looking around for any place that I can take her. When I spot a dark hallway behind me and off to the side, I tell my brothers in Russian where I'm headed. Vitaly laughs and Matvey just shakes his head and then glares at the man who's dared to come a bit too close to his personal space. The man raises his hands and quickly backs off. My brothers follow behind us, but once we hit the hallway, they form a wall, blocking anyone else from following after us.

"Make it quick," Vitaly yells.

Yeah, that won't be a fucking problem. I'm already covered in pre-cum and so aroused I can barely think.

"What are we doing?"

I nip at her bottom lip. "I need you, *malinkaya*. Right fucking now."

Seeing a door on the right, I open it and carry her through. It's a small room, and I have no idea what it used to be, and I don't care. I set her down and kiss her hard while I undo her pants and yank them down along with her panties. Cupping her pussy, I groan when I feel how wet she is.

"You're still bleeding." Her fingers lightly graze under the cut along my bicep as she rocks her hips against my hand and moans.

I suck her bottom lip and undo my pants, reaching in to free my cock.

"You're hurt," she protests, but it's muffled because I won't stop kissing her.

"Nothing is going to stop me from fucking you right now, baby. Not a goddamn thing."

I grab her ass, picking her up and pressing her against the door. She's still clutching my shirt in her hand when she wraps her arms around my neck.

"This is going to be rough and fast, but I swear I'll make it up to you later. I'll be so fucking gentle later, baby."

She nods her head while her lips part in a gasp when she feels the head of my cock pressing against her wet pussy.

"You ready, *malinkaya*?"

“Yes,” she whispers, opening her eyes to meet mine. The bare window behind us lets in enough light from the streetlamp for me to see her well enough, but she’s still mainly in shadow. I still see her beautiful shocked face when I thrust into her, though. Her body tightens around me as I start to fuck her hard and fast. Fingers tighten in my hair, fisting it to the point of pain as I pin her against the wall and slam into her again and again.

She whispers my name in a breathy rush right before her mouth crashes against mine. Her tongue delves inside like she’s trying to memorize every damn inch of me, and her hunger just spurs me on even more. The pace is brutal and relentless and she takes every goddamn thrust I give her. Her pussy tightens around me, and when I feel a shudder run through her body as she whimpers into my mouth, I fuck her harder until I’m growling her name and shooting my seed so deeply inside her that she’ll be dripping me from her sweet cunt all goddamn night.

“Fucking hell.” I give a soft laugh and let out a shaky breath before giving her another slow kiss. Realizing how rough I’d been, I pull back and ask, “Was I too rough?” My eyes run over her, worried that I might’ve hurt her, but there’s a lazy grin playing at her lips, and she looks anything but upset.

“You weren’t too rough.” She pats my cheek and lets out a cute laugh. “I may be walking funny for a few days, but you weren’t too rough.”

“Let’s get you home and into a hot bath.”

“Only if you join me.”

I smile and kiss her again before slowly sliding out of her. She winces and then gives me a reassuring smile when she sees the worried look on my face. I dress her, and then tuck myself away and pull my T-shirt back on. The cut on my arm is aching like a motherfucker, and it hasn’t stopped bleeding yet. It’s possible picking her up and fucking her hadn’t been the smartest choice, but there was no way I could resist. Blood drips onto the ground, and when she grabs my hands, lifting them up to inspect them in the dim light, she bites her bottom lip and turns those big eyes up to me.

“Thanks for making sure he can never hurt me again,” she whispers. “I’m so sorry you got hurt, though.”

I smile and tap the tip of her nose. “This is nothing, *malinkaya*. It’ll be gone in a few days.” Leaning closer, I kiss her forehead, breathing in the scent of her. “I will always protect you. You’re safe with me. Please don’t ever doubt that.”

“I know I am.” She gently kisses my swollen, bloody hands and then looks up at me. “Ready to face your adoring fans?”

I let out a harsh laugh. “Fuck them. I didn’t do this for them, and not a single one of them actually gives a shit about me. They’d be acting the same way if I’d been the one on the ground out there.”

Jolene shakes her head, wanting to rid the image from her mind as I clasp her hand in mine and open the door. Vitaly and Matvey are still guarding the way, but the crowd’s a bit smaller now. Hopefully they’ll all take the hint and head for the bars. When we’re almost to them, I see David and Aaron walk over. I let out an annoyed groan that only Jolene can hear.

“There’s the winner,” David says, smiling and smacking me on the back as soon as I’m close enough. “You made us a fuck-ton of money tonight.”

“Glad to hear it,” I say, not giving the slightest fuck that he’s now a richer man than he was an hour ago.

“I need you to come to the Red Viper tonight.”

“We weren’t planning on going out anywhere,” I try to tell him, but he just shakes his head and waves away my excuse.

“There’s someone very important who wants to meet you and your brothers. Call them and have them meet you there. You have one hour.”

Before I can even ask who the fuck it is, he and Aaron turn around to leave. David looks back at me and yells, “Bring your pet.”

“Do you think it’s him?” Matvey asks in Russian.

“Maybe,” I say. I don’t like not knowing what’s going on, but this could be the meeting we’ve been waiting for.

“I’m assuming I’m the pet, right?”

I look down at Jolene. “I don’t want you going. I can drop you off at the penthouse.”

“I’m staying with you,” she quickly says.

I can hear Vitaly on the phone with Roman when I lean down to cup Jolene’s face. “I don’t want you anywhere near these assholes.”

“Yeah, but he told you to bring me, and it sounds like this could be really important.”

“I don’t give a fuck what he said. I’m not putting you in danger, *malinkaya*.”

“I won’t be in danger.” She gives me a small smile and fists my shirt. “I’ll be with you. Plus, I have the tattoo, and your brothers will be there.”

“She’s right,” Matvey says. “We don’t have time to drop her off anyway. We need to get you stitched up. She’ll be safe, Lev. We won’t let anything happen to her.”

“I’ll be fine without stitches,” I tell him.

He raises a dark brow at me. “It’s still bleeding. You really want to go into that club with an open wound?”

I grimace because he has a point. Sanitary is the last word I’d use to describe that club. Vitaly hangs up the phone and says, “They’re meeting us there.”

Resigning myself to what’s about to happen, I follow my brothers as we skirt around the crowd, making our way to where we parked. We wave off the men who want to congratulate me and the women who want to fuck me until we’re finally outside. The cool night air hits us, and I’m glad I’d insisted that Jolene wear something warm. I keep her pressed against me as we walk over and I lean against the side of Matvey’s Camaro. He opens the door and reaches in for the first-aid kit he keeps in the back.

“I thought you needed stitches,” Jolene says, wondering why we aren’t going to the hospital.

“I do, and I’m about to get them,” I tell her.

Vitaly laughs at the horrified look on her face. He ruffles her hair and says, “Don’t worry, little sis, Matvey may look scary, but he actually has a very gentle touch.”

“Fuck you,” Matvey mutters, but there’s no anger in it. He puts the case on the hood of the car and starts getting out what he needs. This isn’t the first time he’s stitched me up, and I’m guessing it won’t be the last. When he grabs the bottle of vodka, Vitaly lets out an exaggerated groan.

“Do you have an extra bottle in there? I could use a drink because watching this is going to be painful for me too.”

Matvey raises a brow at him but hands him a small bottle of vodka. “I had no idea you were so sensitive.”

“A delicate flower,” Vitaly says with a smug grin. He looks down at Jolene. “That’s what they call me.”

“Yeah, I bet.” She laughs when he touches his heart and gives her a pained look at her disbelief.

“Okay, this is going to hurt for real,” Matvey warns, holding the bottle to my arm.

Jolene steps closer, wrapping her arms around my waist and hugging me as Matvey tips the bottle, dousing my cut in vodka. I grit my teeth and then let out a string of Russian that has Vitaly laughing as he nearly chokes on his vodka.

“Your man has one hell of a potty mouth,” he tells Jolene. “You should’ve heard what he just said about my mother.”

Jolene rests her hand against my cheek and kisses my neck. Having her comfort me is so fucking cute. I’ve gone my whole life without a woman’s gentle touch. It’s something I never once thought I’d want, but it’s nice, and when Matvey starts sewing my skin back together, I nuzzle my face against hers, breathing in the scent of her and barely noticing the pain.

“Do you need a hug from me too?” Vitaly whispers, leaning in close. “Did you tell her that I held your hand while you got your dick pierced?”

“You’re such a fucker,” I tell him, unable to hold back the laugh at the image he’s put in my head.

I can feel Jolene’s body shaking with laughter, and when I look at Matvey, I can tell he’s fighting a grin. He stays focused on what he’s doing, though, and once he’s finished, he pours some more vodka on it and then slaps a bandage over it.

“God, that was brutal,” Vitaly says, handing the nearly empty bottle back to Matvey. “I pulled through, but around the tenth stitch, it was a real battle of wills.”

“You’re an inspiration to us all,” I tell him.

He shrugs and squeezes my shoulder. “I try.”

“We should get going,” Matvey says, throwing his supplies back in his kit before tossing it in the backseat. “Roman and Danil will meet us in the parking lot.”

They get in the car while I put Jolene’s helmet on her and do the buckle, giving her head a soft tap, before I pull my own on. When she’s snuggly wrapped around my back in the death grip she prefers, I follow Matvey out of the parking lot. I stay behind him this time, not bothering to speed ahead because I have no desire to spend any more time there than I have to. The parking lot is full when we get there, and we pull around to the back corner where we usually park. Danil and Roman are sitting in Danil’s Aston Martin, and as soon as we park, they get out and walk over.

“Vitaly said it was one hell of a fight,” Roman says, squeezing my shoulder to let me know he’s glad it went okay.

“From what I can see, Konstantin is still in Berlin. It’s possible it’s someone high up or maybe even his younger brother,” Danil says.

“Let’s go fucking find out,” Matvey says.

Jolene clutches my shirt and looks at the club. The last time she was here she was forced here after being beaten, sold to me, and then forced to get a tattoo, and I feel like a giant ass for letting her come back here again.

“I’m so sorry, *malinkaya*. I should’ve taken you home.”

“No, I’m fine, Lev. I promise.” She looks down at her outfit. “I just feel like an idiot wearing this. I’m way overdressed.”

I run my eyes over her jeans and the red hoodie she looks so fucking cute in. “You look perfect. I don’t want you wearing less clothing, baby. You may be overdressed, but at least these assholes won’t be able to see what only belongs to me. Here,” I say, pulling up the sleeve on her left arm so the ouroboros tattoo is easily visible. “Don’t let that slip down.”

“I won’t.” She grabs my hand and gives me a nod, letting me know she’s ready.

“Just stay quiet and right next to me,” I tell her, “and I’ll get us out of here as quickly as I can.”

“Okay,” she whispers, falling in step next to Vitaly when we join my brothers and head for the bouncer on duty. He recognizes us and lets us through without a fuss. The club is just as depressing as usual, and as we weave our way through the crowd, I ignore the looks the women give me and keep Jolene pressed tightly against me. At the VIP section, I recognize the redhead manning the rope. She’s given me a few lap dances that I had no choice but to get, and I dread walking past her. When Roman reaches her, she smiles and unhooks the rope for him. He ignores her and so does Danil. Vitaly gives her a smile, but when she sees me, her whole damn face lights up. It doesn’t help at all that she’s topless and wearing a sparkly thong.

“Lev!” she practically squeals, but when she takes a step closer, I hold up my hand to stop her and then wrap both my arms around Jolene.

Lowering my head, I kiss Jolene’s cheek and whisper by her ear. “I’m so fucking sorry, baby. I swear I’ve never fucked her. You’re my whole world, *malinkaya*. No other woman exists for me.”

She gives a soft nod, and when I stand back up to my full height, I keep her close to me as we walk past the redhead, who’s not smiling nearly as big now, and into the VIP section where David and Aaron are already

waiting. The man seated with them turns his head when we get closer, and I have to hide my surprise when I see Osip Lebedev looking right at me.

My arm tightens around Jolene, pulling her even closer in an attempt to get as much distance between her and the man who traffics women for a living while Vitaly mutters a low, “fucking hell,” right next to me.

“There they are,” David says, smiling and gesturing to the empty seats across from him. He turns to Osip while we sit. “These are the men who have been taking care of Alessi’s men.”

Osip’s blue eyes study us. I pull Jolene into my lap, keeping her close to me. She looks scared, and I’m pretty sure it’s not an act. She senses the change in us. She knows something big is happening. Osip looks a lot like his older brother as he studies us. They have the same dark hair, same blue eyes, but Osip’s build is slightly smaller. Even in the expensive suit, though, I recognize a man who knows how to hold his own in a fight, and I have no doubt that the man in front of me is far more skilled than anyone else I’ve ever gone up against.

“We meet at last,” he says in Russian. “I’ve heard so much about the Melnikov brothers from our stupid American friend here.” He nods toward David, who smiles like an idiot, not having the faintest idea what’s been said. Osip waves a hand to one of the topless waitresses. When she saunters over, he grabs her ass and says, “Bring us a bottle of your best vodka.” He squeezes her cheek hard enough to make her wince. “Don’t bring us your cheap shit.”

The waitress runs off as soon as he lets her go. He gives a soft laugh and turns back to look at Vitaly. “I hear your club is a lot better than this shithole.”

Vitaly follows his lead and sticks to Russian. “It’s nicer, yeah, but it serves a different purpose. Everything hinges on its reputation for being a respectable place. The women are there by choice, and they don’t do anything they don’t want to do.”

“Sounds boring,” Osip says with a harsh laugh.

Vitaly shrugs. “It’s the only way. The mayor and several congressmen are regular customers. If people start talking about how the women are forced to be there or that they’re being raped in the backrooms, well, that’s not so great for business.” He flicks a finger around, gesturing to the club we’re in. “This is where you come if you want to fuck some random pet or figure out how you can buy one of your own. You go to Pink if you want to

enjoy a damn good steak and gorgeous women without your name being linked to anything that could land you in jail and ruin your career.”

Osip laughs. “In Moscow you can have it all in one place. What made you decide to come here?”

Before we can answer, the waitress comes back with our drinks. While she opens the bottle and pours us each a shot, I lean down so I can whisper against Jolene’s ear. “You’re doing so good, baby.”

She gives the barest hint of a nod to let me know she’s heard and then she rests her head against my shoulder, her body molding to mine. Osip watches us before turning his attention back to the waitress when she starts to leave. He grabs her wrist and points to the ground at his feet. She’s been working here long enough to know what that means. She drops to her knees, and when he sees that she’s kneeling and waiting for instruction, he ignores her, reaching for his drink instead.

He raises it in a toast when the rest of us grab ours. “To new and profitable friendships,” he says, tossing back his drink. I swallow it down, knowing it’s going to take a hell of a lot more than one shot to get me through this night.

“I feel like we’re at a disadvantage here,” Danil says, setting his shot glass back down. “You know who we are, but we don’t even know your name.”

“You don’t?” Osip asks, an amused smile on his face.

“No,” Danil says, playing dumb and nodding towards David and Aaron, who have been completely left out of this conversation. “They don’t tell us names.”

“Well, that’s good. I’d have to shoot them if they did. I’m Osip Lebedev.” He nods at Jolene. “My brother runs the Bratva that’s been supplying you women.” He gives a soft laugh. “Is she really the sister of the man you beat to death tonight?”

“She is,” I say, giving Jolene’s thigh a soft squeeze when she startles at my voice.

“Thanks for that, by the way. I won a lot of money. I was there, watching from the back. When he pulled that knife, I almost thought he had you.”

“So did he,” I say, making Osip smile.

“So what are you going to do with her?”

I meet his cold, dead stare. “I’m keeping her.”

He holds my gaze for a few seconds before he lets out a soft laugh. Filling another shot for himself, he says, "When you find good pussy, you keep it." He tosses the shot back.

Still ignoring the poor woman kneeling at his feet, he looks at Roman. "You never answered my question. What made you decide to come to America? From what I hear, the Melnikov Bratva was doing well in Moscow. Why uproot and come here to start from scratch?"

"We wanted a change," Roman says, sounding bored, "and we were tired of constantly having to protect our territory from threats. It's easier here. You can take and hold a city fairly easily. Plus, the politicians always have secrets they're willing to do anything to keep. More money, more power, less work."

"It was an easy decision," Danil says with a laugh.

"America does have its perks," Osip admits. "So tell me about the Alessi trouble."

"He lost an auction to me, and he wasn't pleased," Danil says. "He's been retaliating, but I think he's learning that it's not going to work."

"Throwing a bunch of severed heads on a man's front lawn will do that," Vitaly says with a laugh.

Osip nods his approval, and while he thinks, he slowly turns the shot glass in a circle. "My brother doesn't want any trouble. We realize you've now claimed this territory as yours, but it's also the city we've been doing business in for a long time." He pauses before saying, "That complicates things."

My brothers and I remain silent, looking like we don't have a care in the world, but I know how tense we all are right now. We have to get in good with Osip and his brother. We need to form a relationship with them if we're ever going to find Alina. Without them, she'll be lost to us forever.

Finally, Roman speaks. "We have no desire to stop your business." He gives a soft laugh. "We enjoy your business a great deal."

"What do you want then?" Osip asks, cutting to the heart of the matter.

"We want to be involved," Roman says.

"A partnership?" Osip asks, raising a brow.

Roman laughs. "No, nothing so official. We want to run our section of the city, and we won't cause you any trouble when you do your business, but we want to be involved."

“You mean you want a cut of the profits?” Osip gives a soft laugh and settles back in his chair. Reaching a hand out, he gently starts to stroke the woman’s long, blonde hair.

“It seems like a reasonable thing to ask,” Danil says, “especially considering how much money we’ve made for your Bratva. We’ve given you millions, made you almost that much on the bets you’ve placed on my brother’s fights, and we’re keeping Alessi under control, giving your Bratva a safe place to do business.”

“Very true,” Osip agrees while he continues to pet the woman. “You could make things very difficult for us, and I think we can all agree that no one wants that. My brother sent me here to meet you and to extend an invitation.”

Jolene feels me tense and runs her fingers along the back of my neck where Osip can’t see. Her caress calms me as we wait for Osip to continue. He draws it out, pouring another drink before he goes back to lazily petting the woman at his feet. She’s mistakingly relaxed, deciding that maybe he isn’t such a bad guy. She’s in for one hell of a surprise.

“If you can continue to keep the Alessi family under control, then Konstantin wants you all to come to dinner with him in one month. I’ll send you the address the day of, and it’s a family affair,” he says, giving us a grin that doesn’t even come close to meeting his eyes. “He wants Emily, Simona, and Jolene to attend.”

My blood runs cold at the sound of her name on his lips, and Jolene lifts her head up when she hears it.

“You want us to bring our pets and Roman’s wife?” Danil asks.

Osip gives him a look that clearly says *let’s cut the bullshit*. “No, I want you to bring both your wives.” He turns his gaze to me. “And based on how quickly the Melnikov brothers seem to act, I’m guessing Jolene will be your wife by then.”

He’s not wrong, but I don’t give him the satisfaction of looking surprised at the obvious background check he’s done on us. Not even David and Aaron know about Danil and Simona’s wedding. The paperwork was filed, though, so it’s not like it’s impossible to figure out, but it still shows they took the trouble to look into all of us.

“It’s not unusual for a man to marry his pet,” he says with a laugh. “I mean, after you go through all the trouble to train them, no other pussy will ever do.” He smiles down at the woman he’s petting, but there’s nothing

nice about it. “Don’t worry. Konstantin’s wife will be there, and we wouldn’t want her to be lonely.”

I barely resist rolling my eyes. This isn’t about his wife feeling left out. This is about getting us on equal ground, putting us in a position where we all have something to lose. It’s an attempt to make monsters civilized, and it’s a façade that could easily shatter, but we have no choice but to agree to it.

“We’ll be there,” Roman says while the rest of us nod our agreement and seal our fate.

“Perfect. I’ll let my brother know.” Without any warning, he fists the blonde’s hair tight enough to make her yelp as he stands. “Enjoy your evening, gentlemen,” he tells us. “I’m going to go have some fun.” He walks off, dragging the poor girl behind him. She tries like hell to gain her balance, but her stilettos can’t get traction. He drags her away, and when he walks past another topless woman, he grabs her wrist, taking her with them.

They disappear from sight, and I look down to see Jolene pleading with me to do something. I shake my head, letting her know it’s not going to happen. Her eyes go back to searching the crowd, trying to find where Osip has gone. I keep my arm tightly around her waist in case she has some crazy idea to jump up and go running after them.

“Well, I have no idea what just happened,” David says with a laugh, “but I hope it was good.”

“It was good,” Roman assures him, grabbing the bottle and pouring himself a shot before handing it to Danil.

We each take one more shot before standing up to go. We have a lot to talk about and none of us wants to do it here. We don’t know how many Lebedev men are at the club, but it’s safe to say that Osip doesn’t go anywhere alone. We can’t risk someone overhearing us. I keep Jolene in my arms, turning her so we’re chest to chest. She wraps her arms and legs around me and whispers in my ear.

“Are we leaving now?”

“Yeah, we’re done.”

“Good. I don’t like it here.”

“You and me both, baby.”

We weave our way through the packed club, and once we’re outside, none of us breaks the silence. I know Jolene wants to ask me what happened, but she senses that now isn’t the time and keeps quiet. The way

her fingers are playing with the back of my hair lets me know that it's killing her to keep her curiosity in check. I give her ass a soft pat to let her know I appreciate it. She kisses my neck in response, making me smile.

We leave the club together, and once we're on the main road, I pass my brothers while Jolene hugs me tightly, not daring to let go of me to give them a wave. We beat them to the penthouse by a few minutes, and as soon as I pull her helmet free, she opens her mouth. Before she can get a single word out, I cup her face and press my lips to hers. I kiss her slowly and deeply, feeling her body soften a little more with each swipe of my tongue. I let her feel how much I love her and how fucking sorry I am that I can't give her the safe, peaceful life she deserves.

When I pull back, she smiles and says, "Nice try, but you're not getting out of answering my questions."

I laugh and cup the back of her head. "It was worth a shot."

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Chapter 15

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Jolene

I sit with Emily and Simona and watch Lev with his brothers. They keep speaking in Russian, looking both tense and excited. Matvey scrubs a hand over the back of his neck, too antsy to even stand still. He paces the kitchen while Danil focuses on the laptop in front of him and Lev and Vitaly lean against the counter talking to Roman. After the kiss Lev gave me in the parking garage, his brothers had pulled up, sparing him from my many questions.

Everyone has their limit, though, and I manage to wait another sixty seconds before I hit mine.

"Someone please explain what the hell is going on," I say, looking at Lev and then zeroing in on each of his brothers.

"Yes, we're going crazy here," Emily says, backing me up.

"You know we're going to find out anyway," Simona says, making Danil give an amused smile.

"You can try," he says, winking at her.

"Oh come on." Her exasperated tone matches how we're all feeling. "We're a part of this too."

I look at Lev, meeting his eyes until he finally sighs. "They're right, and they're going to find out soon enough anyway."

"What are we going to find out?" Emily asks.

Roman looks over at us. "We met with Osip Lebedev tonight."

"What?" Simona looks at me. "You were there? You saw him?"

"Yeah, but they spoke Russian the whole time. I had no idea who he was or what they said."

Danil shuts his laptop. "Konstantin will be coming here soon, and he wants a big family dinner with all of us."

"You mean us too?" Simona asks.

"Yes," Danil says, looking as thrilled as his brothers do. "He knows we're married, and he wants the three of you with us. It's in one month."

Roman scrubs a hand over his face. "I don't like it."

"None of us do," Lev says, "but there's no way to not bring them."

"He'll see that as an insult," Matvey says, agreeing with Lev, "and that'll be the last time he ever lets us near him."

They all know he's right. If they ever want to get Alina back, this is the only way to do it.

"Does Dominic know?" Emily asks.

"Not yet," Roman tells her. "I'm going to call him in a minute. He needs to know to not send any more men in right now. We need to let things cool down, make it look like he's gotten the hint to back off. Maybe he and Antonio can take a trip to Italy for a few weeks."

"We'll be fine going," Simona says while Emily and I nod beside her. "We're in this too, and we'll do whatever it takes to bring Alina home. Besides, we'll have you five with us, and I'm guessing you won't allow us out of your sight."

"Never," Danil says, staring at his wife while his brothers all nod in agreement. I see the worried look on Lev's face and give him a smile to let him know I'm okay. I may be new to this family, but I'm just as committed to helping them. They feel more like my family than my own ever did, and I can't imagine how scared Alina must be. No way in hell could I ever just walk away when I'm in a position to help. I feel bad enough about leaving the Red Viper when that jackass walked off, dragging two women behind him. I'm in this till the end, no matter what happens.

Realizing there's no way out of this, they resign themselves to the fact that they'll be taking us to dinner with one of the most dangerous Bratvas in the world. I'd be worried if I was going with anyone other than the five men who I know would risk everything to keep us safe. Besides, I have no doubt the Melnikov Bratva is just as dangerous. After all, I did just watch one of their members beat my brother to death. It should've upset me more than it had, but all I felt was relief when I realized Sebastian was dead. My heart had nearly stopped when I'd seen him pull the knife on Lev and cut his arm,

and knowing that it was finally over, that Sebastian could never hurt him or me ever again, it had been like a weight had fallen from my shoulders.

“Stop looking so worried,” I tell him when we step into our room. I reach up and massage the tension from his furrowed brow. “You have an entire month to worry. Save some for later.”

The corner of his mouth twitches, but he doesn’t laugh. “I am worried, *malinkaya*. I don’t want you anywhere near them.”

I rest my hand on his chest and say, “You’re not going to like this, but I need to ask you something.”

“I know.” He sighs and places his hand on top of mine. “Go ahead and ask.”

“How can you guys go to that club and watch those women? How can you sit there and get lap dances from them? I mean, I know you told me that you and your brothers have to go there and put up with everything, but how do you do it without going crazy? I feel so bad for those women that Osip took back with him. What’s he doing to them?” I’m blabbering, but I can’t stop. “That’s a stupid question. I *know* what he’s doing to them, but it’s worse, isn’t it? It’s worse than I could imagine?”

Lev’s light blue eyes are filled with so many things when he says, “Yes, it’s probably worse than you could imagine, and I don’t want you to try. I’ve told you before we aren’t the good guys, *malinkaya*. When we were at that club and Osip dragged that woman off, I felt your body stiffen. I knew you wanted to run after them, and I would’ve carried you out of there kicking and screaming if that’s what needed to be done to keep you safe, because your life is what’s most important to me, and I won’t risk it for anyone. Do you understand?”

“If you want a knight in shining armor, baby, you’ve got the wrong goddamn guy. I’m not going to ride in and save the day. I’m going to fight and kill and sell illegal things to very bad men, and if at the end of the day you’re safe and my brothers are safe, that’s all I fucking care about. I will *never* risk your life or the lives of my brothers to save a woman I don’t know. It’s not going to fucking happen. Not tonight, not ever.”

He squeezes my hand and kisses my forehead. “When we take down the Lebedev Bratva, we’ll free the women they have, but I won’t risk everything to save the life of one person I don’t even know.” He leans closer so we’re almost eye level, and I can hear the finality in his tone when he says, “I will not sacrifice you for them.”

His thumb runs along my bottom lip. "I wouldn't survive losing you, *malinkaya*. The thought of something happening to you makes me feel like I can't breathe. So please don't ask me to risk your life for someone else's, because it's never going to fucking happen."

I nod, unable to look away from his fierce stare. I know I should probably want a law-abiding man who would risk everything and everyone to save a person in need, but that's not who Lev is, and if I'm being completely honest, I'm really glad he's not willing to sacrifice me for someone else. No one's ever put me first, but Lev does it as if it's the most natural thing in the world. It never even occurred to him to put my life at risk, and that just warms my damn heart. Maybe that makes me an asshole, but if it were reversed, I'd never sacrifice Lev for anyone else. No goddamn way. I'd let the whole world burn to ash if it meant keeping him safe.

"I understand," I tell him. "I'd never risk you for anyone else either."

He gives me that sexy smile of his and slides a hand down my back to cup my ass and pull me closer. "You're so cute when you get protective."

I roll my eyes at him, but he just laughs and picks me up. I look at his bandaged arm. "You need to stop picking me up. You just got stitches."

"So?"

"So you need to rest. It's my turn to play the overbearing nursemaid," I tell him, which really makes him laugh.

"Yes, please."

"I'm serious."

"So am I." He lowers me down so I can feel how hard he is. "I think I might've thought of something that'll make me feel a whole lot better."

"That's not how this works. I'm the one in charge."

Lev raises a brow at that. "Yes, ma'am."

"You need a shower, and I want to put some real antibiotic ointment on this instead of just vodka."

He grins and carries me to the bathroom. When he sets me down, I start the shower and then help him get his shirt off. The bandage Matvey used is waterproof, so I keep it on to protect the stitches while he gets cleaned up. His smile grows when I undo his pants.

"I'm just helping you get undressed."

"Of course, *malinkaya*."

When his fully hard cock pops free, lightly bouncing right next to my face as I slide his jeans lower, his deep laugh has me blushing while I try to

look unaffected. I manage to get him naked, but when I don't strip, he reaches out and tugs on my hoodie.

"I helped you bathe when you were hurt, baby. I also shaved you and made you come and then jerked off." He laughs, and it's so carefree and at such odds with how intimidating he can look that I can't help but crack a smile and let out a small laugh. "You can do all those things, too, baby. I keep myself trimmed, but you can shave me if you want, and I have no problem with you making me come and then touching yourself in front of me. Fair is fair."

"Yeah, you've told me that before." He gives me a wink when I start to undress.

"I'm feeling better already. See what a good little nurse you are?"

"Well if you're feeling better, then I guess you can shower on your own."

"Let's not get too ahead of ourselves." He pulls me into the steaming shower as soon as my socks are off. It's a large shower with plenty of room for the two of us. I position him under the stream of hot water and grab a cloth and some body wash. If I'm going to do this, then I might as well have fun with it.

I start at his tattooed neck, slowly washing him clean. He watches me as I work my way around his sculpted upper body, scrubbing the pecs and abs, but ignoring the dick that's jutting out and hitting me in the stomach. Stepping to the side, I'm careful to gently rub the cloth around the bandage before stepping around so I can do his back. Lev doesn't have a shy bone in his body, so he stands there perfectly calm while I ogle the most perfect ass I've ever seen in my life.

"Everything okay, *malinkaya*?" I can hear the amusement in his voice. "You stopped scrubbing."

"You have the most perfect ass I've ever seen," I say, unable to hide the awe and play it cool.

His deep laugh fills the shower as I drag the cloth along his muscled back and then finally over his toned, hard ass. I take my time, dragging my soapy fingers over him when the cloth is more of a barrier than I want. Lowering down, I work on the backs of his legs and then his feet before slowly working my way up the front of his legs. His thick, muscular thighs tense when I start to scrub them, and when I look up, I'm rewarded with a dark look and a cock that's not going to be going down anytime soon.

He hisses out my name when I run the cloth along his balls and then slowly work my way up his thick shaft and along his piercings. Dropping the cloth, I use my hands to help rinse all the soap off his beautiful body. When I grab the shampoo, he cups my face, slowly dragging his thumb over my cheek.

“Are you trying to kill me, baby?”

“I’m just washing you,” I say and give him a sweet smile. “Now bend down a bit, because I can’t reach you well enough to wash your hair.”

He grins at my bossy tone but lowers his head enough for me to reach him easily. I work my hands into his silky hair, massaging his scalp until he groans and grabs onto my waist, pulling me closer.

“I love your hair,” I tell him.

“As much as my ass?” he teases.

I laugh and guide him back under the spray of water so I can rinse the shampoo out. “I love every part of you, Lev. You’re perfect, from this gorgeous head of hair down to the feet that somehow look just as sexy as the rest of you, you’re perfect.”

He lifts his head up to meet my eyes, and the look on his face is so goddamn sweet that it makes my heart hurt. I have no doubt that Lev’s had women fighting for his attention since he was a teenager, but the way he’s looking at me makes it clear that no one’s ever properly loved him before, and I feel like the luckiest person alive that I get to be the one to give him this.

His thumb caresses my wet cheek while his other hand keeps a tight grip on my hip. “Thank you for loving me,” he says, and that ache in my heart jumps to my throat as I try not to cry, because there’s something about this big, strong man looking so vulnerable that just breaks my heart in the best way possible.

“Thank you for loving me,” I say.

He hears the crack in my voice and gives me a soft smile as his thumb runs over my bottom lip. “I never thought of myself as soft in any way, *malinkaya*,” he says, keeping his eyes glued to my lips as he gently parts them with his thumb. “But you’ve proven me wrong, because I fucking melt when I’m near you.” He groans when I latch onto his thumb and suck him in deeper. “You have me wrapped around your finger, and I would do anything for you.”

I run my tongue along his finger before slowly pulling back. When his thumb is free of my lips, I meet his eyes and smile. "I'm glad to hear that because this shower isn't over. There's one more thing I want from you."

His smile grows as he pulls me closer, tight enough for his cock to press harder against my stomach. "Anything you want, *malinkaya*. Just say it, and it's yours."

"I was hoping you'd say that." I lean forward and kiss his chest while he cups my face and threads his fingers into my wet hair. Running my tongue over him, he groans as I kiss and lick and suck on his beautiful tattooed skin, slowly making my way down. He growls my name when I run my tongue over his abs, and when I fist his cock and run my tongue over his slit, he fists my hair tighter in warning.

"Baby, what are you doing?"

I flick my tongue out again and probe his piercing while I raise my eyes to his. His broad chest moves with his breaths that are quickly speeding up, and the dark look in his eyes should make me nervous, but it doesn't. It just makes me want him even more.

"I'm taking care of you, Lev." I wrap my lips around his thick head and give him a soft suck. He groans and lets out a string of sexy-sounding Russian. "But I need your help."

"You want me to teach you how to suck my dick, *malinkaya*?"

His accent is much thicker, and the sound of it has me rubbing my wet thighs together as I give him another suck. I've been waiting a long time for this, and my lip is finally healed. I don't have high hopes that I'll be able to take him all the way in, but I want to try. I want to make this feel good for him, and I want to see him come apart at my touch.

I give him another suck before lifting off him, and as soon as he pops free of my lips, he pulls me back up to standing. Cupping my face, he watches me, making sure this is really what I want.

"Are you sure? You don't have to do this."

"I want to do this," I tell him.

He gently pushes my wet hair aside and leans closer. His lips brush across mine, teasing me with how near he is. His tongue lightly grazes my bottom lip before he captures it between his teeth, gently sucking it into his mouth. One of his hands slides down my back to cup my ass while the other fists my hair hard enough to tilt my head back, giving him better access. He deepens the kiss, taking his time and savoring every second. When he

slowly starts to lead me backwards, I wrap my arms around his neck, letting him guide me to the bamboo seat in the corner. The backs of my thighs hit the wood, but he doesn't break the kiss. He leans down with me as I sit before finally breaking away.

Sliding his thumb between my lips, he uses his other fingers to grip my jaw. "I will never be able to get enough of this sweet mouth, *malinkaya*." With my lips still wrapped around his thumb, he kisses me and groans. "And now I'm going to fuck it. I'm going to fuck this sweet, innocent mouth and make it mine."

I nod my head and give his thumb a suck.

"That's right, baby, just like that. You're going to suck me so goddamn good."

He slowly pulls his thumb out before standing back up. The seat puts me at the perfect height, and when he steps closer, I begin to worry that this is only going to end in disappointment for him. I eye the thick length of him, the piercings that form a beautiful ladder that's shown me again and again what true pleasure feels like, and when I hesitate to wrap my lips around him, he hooks a finger under my chin and lifts my face to his.

"I'm more than happy to drop to my knees and bury my face between your legs, *malinkaya*. I don't ever want you to do something you don't want to do."

"I want to do this," I quickly say, digging my fingers into his muscular thighs in case he gets the crazy idea to step away from me. "I just don't want you to be disappointed. I know it won't be the best blowjob you've ever had." It kills me to say it, but we both know it's true.

I'm not expecting the pained look in his eyes. "Don't ever doubt that everything we share together is the best I've ever had. Every single thing you choose to do with me, every part of you that you choose to share with me, is the best fucking thing I've ever had. You're the only woman in my head. The memories we've created together are the only ones that I remember. When I tell you that no other woman exists for me, baby, I mean every goddamn word of it."

His thumb runs over my lips. "If all you do is suck on my head and look up at me with those beautiful eyes of yours, that will be enough. Fuck," he says with a soft laugh, "it will be more than enough, and it'll be the best fucking blowjob I've ever had."

“You could come just from that?” I ask, because I can handle the head. That at least I know I could manage.

He smiles and taps my bottom lip. “Wrap that pouty mouth around me and find out.”

I smile and open my mouth. Before I take him in, I run my tongue over his slit, tracing the piercing and then the ridge of skin along his head. His jaw is tense as his breathing picks up. I slide one hand up his thigh so I can cup his balls, moaning at the weight of them in my hand as I run my tongue down his Jacob’s Ladder. I swipe my tongue lower, hitting the balls I’m still holding, smiling when I hear him hiss out a breath.

“Do you think you could come just from this?” I ask, slowly licking and sucking and kissing my way back up his shaft.

“Yes,” he growls, running his hands through my hair and fisting it. “Your mouth makes me lose my goddamn mind, *malinkaya*. I can barely remember how to fucking breathe right now.”

I smile before wrapping my lips around his head and slowly sucking him in. His hands are so big they feel like they’re cocooning my head as he holds me gently while I suck him. He’s careful to not be too rough with me, to not scare me by holding me still and thrusting into my mouth like I know he’s dying to. The salty taste of his pre-cum fills my mouth, making me suck harder. On instinct, I sink lower, wanting more of him. He groans as the first barbell slides past my lips and then the second. I’ve just taken the third when I have to quickly pull back or gag. I didn’t even make it halfway down his shaft, and disappointment hits me hard.

“It feels fucking amazing,” he says, tapping my cheek lightly so I lift my eyes to his. “So fucking good, baby, and seeing you almost gag on me, goddamn, that’s sexy as hell.”

I raise a brow at him because my mouth is still full of dick and I can’t speak. I’d assumed that a man would want a woman who could deep-throat him like a pro, no gag reflex, just full-on perfection from start to finish.

It’s like he’s read my mind when he says, “My cock is the only one you’ve ever had between these pretty lips, the only one you’ll ever have, and that’s the sexiest goddamn thing in the world to me. I love that you want to do this, and I love that you’re learning how to do it with me. Someday very soon, I’ll put you on your knees and I’ll slide my cock into this sweet mouth, and you’ll know exactly what to expect. You’ll still gag,

but it won't be the same. I'll love it so fucking much, but what will really make me love it is knowing that you learned *with me*."

He brushes the knuckles I still need to bandage along my cheek, and I close my eyes at his touch. Wanting to give him more, I slide down lower, feeling the barbells pass my lips one by one. When I hit the third, I keep going. I gag around him at the fourth, opening my eyes to meet his. Mine water while his grow darker.

"Good girl, baby," he praises, bringing one hand lower to wrap lightly around my neck. The gentle pressure takes my mind off gagging long enough for me to slide past another barbell. He groans when he feels me gag against his fingers and around his cock. I hold still, breathing through my nose as I try to get my body under control.

My lips feel stretched to the max, and I'd never call having a giant pierced cock in my mouth comfortable. It's damn hard to breathe, and I'm super focused on keeping my teeth away from him so I don't accidentally hurt him. With three barbells to go, I'm not so sure I can do it. Before I can try for another, he tightens his grip on me and slowly pulls out, letting me catch my breath while he very slowly fucks my mouth. I moan when he sticks to fucking me with his head for several strokes. I suck him, running my tongue over him, feeling the ache leave my jaw and my body start to relax.

"Your mouth feels like pure heaven, baby," he groans, watching his cock slide between my lips. "Are you going to swallow everything I give you?"

"Mm-hmm," I moan, running my thumb along the underside of his balls, causing him to hiss out a breath and thrust in a little bit harder.

I relax my mouth as best I can and let him take over. As close as he is and as much as he wants this, he never loses control. He thrusts into me deeper, getting just to the point of it being too much before pulling back. I'm so turned on by watching him that I don't realize I've hit that eighth barbell until he growls my name and I feel the base of him hit my lips. Being in this position makes me fully understand what people mean when they say choking on cock, because that's exactly what it fucking feels like. I can't breathe, I can't move, I can't do anything but take it as he stays lodged in my throat and my lungs ache for air.

His eyes stay locked on mine as he slides out once more before thrusting into me with a deep groan. He growls my name as I feel his cock

pulse inside me, filling me to the point of pain, just like he does every time he's inside me. His balls tense beneath my fingers as I keep stroking him while he shoots his seed down my throat. When he's empty, he slowly pulls out. My mouth feels numb, but there's a lingering ache beneath that, and when a string of spit slides out of the corner of my mouth, embarrassed, I reach up to wipe it away.

He stops me, grabbing my hand before it can reach my lips. His eyes run over me like he's memorizing every detail.

"Every time I look at you, I'm going to remember how you looked with this pouty mouth wrapped around my cock. I'm going to remember what you looked like after I pulled out, your lips swollen, my cum and your spit dripping from the corners of your lips, the glazed, sex-hungry look in your hazel eyes, I'm going to remember every goddamn detail."

Sliding his hand up from my neck, he runs his thumb over my swollen lips before picking me up and turning me around. Before I can even blink, my knees are on the seat and my hands are pressed against the tiled wall and his face is buried in my neck.

"I'm also going to remember how I fucked your sweet ass right after I came in your mouth for the very first time."

"What?" I ask, trying to turn my head. He licks a line along my skin and bites the crook of my neck just hard enough to send a thrill through me.

"Wait here."

He leaves me kneeling on the bench with my palms flush against the wet tiles as he steps out of the shower. I hear a drawer opening before he steps back in and comes to stand behind me. The first thing he does is lay a towel down on the seat and then lift me up so I'm kneeling on it instead of the hard wood. It's quickly getting soaked, but Lev doesn't care, and I'm too busy wondering about the bottle in his hand.

Opening his palm, he lets me see the bottle of lube. "I picked this up the other day."

"Lev," I whisper, feeling my butt cheeks clench at the very idea of his cock anywhere near my asshole.

"I'm just asking you to try." He drags the pads of his fingers down my spine. "If you hate it, we stop, no questions asked." He winks and kisses my shoulder. "I have a feeling you're going to love it, though."

I turn so I can see him better. "You won't be disappointed if I don't?"

"Never," he quickly says. "We're just trying it, *malinkaya*."

I nod and turn to face the tiles in front of me as he slides his hand lower, slowly grazing his blunt nails along my ass cheeks. I shiver at the erotic touch, the way it seems to run straight through me. My body tenses when I feel the slippery lube sliding down my ass crack.

“Just relax,” he murmurs against my skin, sliding a finger between my cheeks as his other hand runs down my stomach to cup my pussy.

“Holy shit,” I gasp when he starts to rub my clit while he slowly drags a slippery finger over the one place I thought for sure would never be touched.

He gives a low chuckle and grazes his teeth along my shoulder, softly nipping at the skin while he starts to rub my clit and my asshole at the same time. I feel his cock pressing against my hip, already growing hard again. God, this man’s a fucking machine.

My fingers press hard against the wet tile as my thighs start to shake. He rubs me in firm circles, very slowly pressing harder against the tight hole that, to my absolute amazement, is starting to open for him.

“Fuck, baby,” he growls, “such a good fucking girl. Your tight little ass is begging me to fuck it, *malinkaya*.”

“Lev,” I whisper, feeling the orgasm start to build. He rolls and pinches my clit between his fingers, pulling another moan from me as my hips start to rock. He presses harder against my ass, slipping past the tight ring of muscle with a groan.

“Fucking hell.” His words are thick and raspy as he kisses along my shoulder. Letting go of my clit, he slides two fingers into my pussy while he slowly finger-fucks my ass, going a little deeper with each thrust of his finger. He keeps the hand between my legs pressed tightly against me, creating a friction on my clit that has me gasping and shaking with need.

“God, you’re perfect.” Lev kisses his way up my neck, sucking my earlobe and murmuring, “There’s my perfect little slut, so fucking desperate to come. Look at the way you’re rocking those hips, baby, trying so damn hard to fuck both my hands.” His teeth graze my ear. “Do you want a second finger in your ass, *malinkaya*?”

“Yes,” I pant, barely hanging on. I’m pressing so hard against the tile my fingers are starting to ache, and all I can think about is how badly I need to come.

“Yes, what?” he teases, dragging his nose along the shell of my ear.

“Please put another finger in my ass,” I beg, not even feeling embarrassed by it. I’m way past that.

“Good girl,” he praises, slowly feeding me another finger. “Give me your mouth, baby. I want to taste you as you fall apart.”

The second I turn my head, his lips are on me, stealing my breath with the intensity of the kiss. He speeds both hands up, fucking both my holes until I shatter beneath his touch. He swallows my screams, kissing me through my release as my body bucks and I’m left breathless and shaky with spotty vision and my ears ringing.

He smiles against my lips, keeping his fingers buried inside me. “Ready, baby?”

“What? No, I can’t move, and how are you even able to do this again?” I look down at the hard cock pressed against me. “Shouldn’t you need a breather?”

He laughs and gives me another kiss. “I just watched you come, you’re naked and wet and pressed against me, and your pussy and ass are still clenched so damn tightly around my fingers. No way in fuck could I be soft right now.”

He slowly pulls his fingers from my ass. “There won’t ever be a time when I can’t keep up with you, *malinkaya*, but you have no idea how much I look forward to you trying.”

My pride wants to tell him he’s wrong, but I think we both know he’d be the winner every time. I’m barely keeping myself upright as is. He slides his fingers out of my pussy, giving my clit a soft pat before grabbing the bottle of lube and stepping behind me. He sees me tense and runs his hand along my side and up my chest until he’s cupping one of my breasts. Squeezing my nipple, he says, “I won’t give you more than you can take. We can work up to all of me, *malinkaya*.”

“Thank god,” I whisper, making him give a soft laugh. He’d told me before that he’d only give me half when we did anal, but at the time I never really ever thought we would actually be doing this.

“You don’t have to do half,” I quickly say. “I mean, feel free to just do a third or even a quarter. I’d be okay with that.”

“But you loved my fingers so much,” he reminds me, squeezing my nipple even harder.

I moan and lean into his touch. “Your fingers are much smaller,” I remind him.

“I think you might be surprised by how much you like this.” He kisses my shoulder. “Your ass was very receptive to my fingers.”

He kisses my blushing cheek and drags his thumb over my aching nipple before letting go. I feel the lube dripping down my crack again, and then I hear him rubbing it all over his cock. Gripping my hip with one hand, he holds me still as he guides his head to my clenched asshole.

“Easy, baby,” he murmurs. Dragging his head along my tight hole. The piercing slides along my nerve endings, pulling a moan from me as my hips arch like they have a mind of their own. He feels my body start to relax. “Good girl, just like that.”

I blow out a slow breath and focus on the feel of his hand trailing a path along my side. Goosebumps rise along my skin despite the steamy, sauna-like conditions we’ve created. Dragging his hand along my slippery skin, he caresses my breasts, letting my nipples graze along the calloused palm of his hand as he slowly slides his head into me. When he’s in, I let out the breath I’d been holding.

“Fuck,” he groans, keeping himself still so I can get used to it. It’s not as painful as I thought it’d be. It’s more like pleasure with a slight sting of pain, and when he slowly moves his hips, I gasp at the sensation.

“You like that?” he whispers near my ear, rubbing his palm against my nipple again.

“Yes,” I pant, rocking my hips back. He tightens his fingers on my waist, holding me in place.

“No, baby, I’m in control, and I won’t let you hurt yourself.” He nips at the skin of my neck. “No matter how hard you try to slam your little ass onto my cock, you’ll get what I think you can handle and not an inch more.”

He feeds me a little bit more as I gasp and rest my forehead against the tiled wall. He fucks me with just his head while he plays with my breasts and murmurs god knows what to me in Russian. Just when I think I’m going to lose my damn mind, he slides in a bit more, pulling an embarrassingly loud mewling sound from me that seems to echo off the damn walls.

“Yeah, I think my baby definitely likes having her sweet ass fucked,” Lev whispers in my ear. “Isn’t that right?” He cups one of my breasts as he pulls me back against him and slides his other hand between my legs. His fingers brush my clit in a soft, teasing touch.

“Yes,” I whisper, barely recognizing the ragged sound of my own voice. He gives me another slow rub. “Yes, what?”

He gives a soft laugh at the frustrated groan I give when his fingers brush me in a teasing circle.

“Yes, I like you fucking my ass,” I say, and then I can’t help but add, “I’m as surprised by it as you are.”

He laughs and kisses the side of my face. “I’m not surprised at all, *malinkaya*. I knew you’d love it the second your tight little ass latched onto my finger and you let out that sexy moan.”

Kissing my neck, he slides in another inch, making a shiver of pure pleasure run through me at the feel of his piercings rubbing against all those hidden nerve endings.

“More,” I beg, wanting to feel him inside me, spreading me wide and claiming the last part of myself I have to give.

“Just two more piercings, baby, that’s all you get tonight.”

I whimper in protest, but all he does is laugh and pinch my nipple and clit in warning. He holds me still as I feel another piercing slide into me.

“One more, *malinkaya*,” he murmurs against my skin, giving me the last one I’m going to get. “That’s half my cock, baby, and that’s all you’re getting tonight, but I promise you won’t be complaining.”

Proving his point, he slowly starts to fuck me while he rolls my nipple between his thumb and forefinger and rubs my clit in firm circles. The mix of sensations makes it impossible for me to speak. I can’t do anything except melt against him, letting him use my body as he wants, because I’m more than happy to take whatever he wants to give me.

“So fucking tight,” he growls, speeding his hips up. I’m already close to the edge, but then without warning he slides three fingers into my pussy, pulling a scream from me that he doesn’t even bother muffling. The orgasm slams through me, hitting me hard, and when I clench around him even tighter, he groans and thrusts into me even harder. His hand keeps working me, keeping the pleasure going, and when he lets go, he does it with my name on his lips. The sound of it sends another thrill through me. Hearing this gorgeous man groan my name as he slams into me and comes hard is the best feeling in the world.

He kisses my shoulder and neck as we both slowly come down. Keeping himself inside me, he holds my shaking, exhausted body as he grows soft and I catch my breath.

“I love you so fucking much,” he murmurs against my ear.

“I love you too.” I turn my head and kiss him. “Thanks for only giving me half. I don’t know what the hell I was thinking.”

He laughs and slowly slides out of my ass, kissing me again when he sees me wince. Yeah, half was a much better idea for my first time anal.

“We have plenty of time to work up to the full thing. I’d much rather take it slow and have you enjoy it.”

“Good idea.” I wince again when I try to get down from the stool, and Lev quickly scoops me into his arms. He brings me under the spray of water and gently sets me down before grabbing another cloth and the body wash.

“My turn to wash you.”

I don’t resist. I’m using all my strength to stay upright. He gently washes my body and then quickly washes his cock again before getting the shampoo. By the time he’s rinsing out the conditioner, I’m almost asleep on my feet. When he’s done, he picks me up and wraps a towel around me, drying me off as he kisses my face and tells me how much he loves me. I smile and whisper it back, trying to stay awake, but by the time he carries me to bed, I’m nestled against his neck and fast asleep.

Chapter 16

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Lev

I put Jolene in bed and kiss her cheek before going back to the bathroom. My sexy nurse might have fallen asleep on me, but she was right about getting a real antibiotic on my stitches. I peel off the bandage and rub a layer of the ointment across what will be yet another scar and then put a new bandage on before walking back to the bed.

Pulling back the covers, I spoon Jolene from behind. She moans my name and wriggles her body closer to mine, nestling that ass I just fucked right up against me. I'm still confident my sex drive will always beat hers, but even the most virile of men need rest every now and then, and the day is quickly catching up to me, so instead of sliding back into her like I want, I bring my hand between her legs and slide one finger in instead. I fall asleep with the wet heat of her pussy wrapped around my finger, the feel of her body against mine, and her sweet scent surrounding me.

The next few days she watches over me like a hawk, worrying about my stitches and my knuckles. She'd woken up the next morning after the fight nearly scaring me to death with the worried gasp she'd given. I'd sprung up, reaching for my gun only to realize she'd just seen my swollen, bloody hands and had been worried.

I'm still not used to having someone worry about me. I'm not sure I'll ever be used to it, and part of me hopes I never will. I don't want to ever take it for granted.

I look over at her and smile when she puts another sandwich on my plate.

"I'm going to need to add in extra workouts to burn off all this food you keep feeding me."

She laughs and leans in, kissing the tip of my nose in a way that has to be the cutest goddamn thing I've ever seen.

"I really doubt that, and you need your strength. You're still healing."

I wrap my arm around her and pull her close while I finish my lunch. My brothers and I are leaving soon for a meeting with Dominic, but first we're waiting for Roman and Emily to get back from one of her doctor's appointments. She's getting an ultrasound today, and they're hoping to learn the sex of the baby. We're all ridiculously excited about it.

Vitaly paces the floor in the living room. "I think it's a boy," he says for the thousandth time. "I just have this gut feeling it's a boy."

"Could just as easily be a girl," Danil reminds him.

Vitaly grins. "A little girl would be fucking adorable. She'll give us all heart attacks when she hits her teenage years, but as her favorite uncle I'll make sure no boys get anywhere near her. I think you're right. I think it's a girl."

I laugh and shake my head before bringing my mouth to Jolene's ear. "He's right about one thing. A little girl would be adorable." I splay my palm against her lower belly and nip at her ear. We're both very aware that she hasn't had a period since she came here. The idea of my baby growing in her belly turns me downright feral every time I think about it.

She smiles and reaches a hand behind her to run through my hair while leaning back against me. I keep holding her with one arm while I finish my lunch and listen to everyone guess at whether we're getting a niece or a nephew. Simona has two gift bags ready, one is all pink, and the other is all blue. We're ready for anything.

When we hear the elevator ding, we all turn to look. Roman and Emily step out and then laugh when they see us all staring at them. I can tell by their faces that the ultrasound went well. Roman can't stop smiling and Emily looks like she's about to burst if she doesn't spill the news soon. She rests her hand on the bump that I swear is growing daily at this point and smiles up at Roman.

"Should we tell them or make them wait?" he asks her.

"Don't even think about it," Vitaly says. "We're going crazy here. It's a girl, right?"

Roman laughs and walks to the fridge. Grabbing a magnet, he puts up the sonogram picture. We all crowd around, trying like hell to catch a

glimpse, but aside from the obvious head, I'm clueless as to what in the hell I'm looking at.

"That's definitely a penis," Vitaly says, pointing to a tiny nub that could be anything.

"No way, man," Danil says, "It's a girl."

"All I see is a giant head," Matvey says. "The rest doesn't make any sense."

"Same, brother," I say, laughing at the appalled look Roman gives us.

"Okay, it's obvious that none of us are bright enough to crack this code," Simona says. She grabs the bags, one in each hand, and holds them out to Emily. Roman smiles and kisses her head.

"Go for it, *solnishka*. They won't stop until we tell them."

"No, we will not," Vitaly agrees with a laugh.

Emily smiles and reaches out. At first she goes for the pink bag, making Vitaly give a whoop, but then at the last second, she grabs the blue bag.

Simona and Jolene pull Emily in for hugs while we smack Roman on the back. I ruffle his hair, earning me a look that makes me laugh before I pull him in for a hug. We may not be the most touchy-feely of men with each other, but my brother's having a little boy, so fuck it.

"I'm happy for you," I tell him, "and I can't wait to meet my nephew."

He smacks my back and then squeezes my shoulder. "Thanks, brother." He's still grinning when he says, "I can't believe we're having a boy."

Vitaly goes back to study the photo and then points at the tiny nub he'd spotted earlier. "For his sake, I really hope this grows."

"Fucker," Roman says with a laugh. "It'll grow. It's not like you were born hung like a horse."

"Actually," Vitaly says, laughing even harder, "I was. My mom, unfortunately, didn't think it appropriate to take a photo, but I grew up hearing the whispered stories. Poor thing was constantly getting pissed on because I stuck out of my diapers."

"You're so full of shit," I say, pulling Jolene closer while she laughs in my arms.

"True story," Vitaly says, holding his hand to his heart. "You should've seen how strong my thighs were when I started to walk. That's a lot of weight for a toddler to have to lug around."

By the time he finishes his bullshit story, he's laughing so hard he can barely get the words out. He manages to smack Roman on the back and pull

Emily in for a hug, though.

“In all seriousness, congratulations, and I can’t wait to meet the little guy.”

By the time Sergei, Aleksandr, and Grigori arrive, the women are making plans for the nursery and my brothers and I are already thinking of all the things we need to do to baby proof this place. The first thing will definitely be putting very high locks on every door that leads out to the terrace. The thought of a baby somehow managing to crawl out there will give all of us nightmares.

Pulling Jolene close, I kiss her goodbye and then watch as she goes back to planning with Emily and Simona. I’m so glad they get along. I don’t know what we’d do if our wives hated each other. She gives me a cute smile and wave before I step into the elevator. Roman already called Dominic to let him know the latest update, but he asked if we could meet anyway to talk over specifics. This time when I pull the SUV into the parking garage, the security guard doesn’t make us stop. He lifts the gate, but it’s obvious he doesn’t want to. I smile as we drive past.

“Why the hell does he hate us so much?” Vitaly mutters.

“Because we’re not Italian, and because we don’t have the decency to keep our tattoos hidden beneath our suits,” I tell him.

“Speak for yourself,” Roman says.

“Bullshit,” I tell him, looking over to laugh. “You did that because you had to look presentable for crooked politicians. If you had your way, you’d be just as covered as the rest of us.”

“True enough,” he says with a grin.

We get out and enter the building, and just like last time, security guards are waiting to escort us when we step off the elevator. They don’t take us to the big conference room, though. Instead, we’re led to a large corner office. Stepping in, I run my eyes over the impressive room. Windows line two walls, and there’s enough room for a sitting area. The furniture is dark, but the walls and carpeting are light. Dominic sits behind the large desk, waiting for us. I notice the framed picture on his desk, and when he sees me staring, he stands and walks around to me.

“That’s Isabella a few weeks before she disappeared,” he says.

I look down at the smiling woman. She looks so full of life, so fucking vibrant as she smiles up at Dominic in the photo. She’s giving him bunny

ears, and they're both laughing without a care in the world. I can't help but think of Alina as I set the photo back on his desk.

"I'm sorry," I tell him.

He nods and motions for us to take a seat in the leather chairs that are situated around a low table. "Would anyone like a drink? I can have my secretary bring in coffee."

"No, we're good," Roman says as we all sit. "Antonio's not joining us?"

Dominic sighs and sits down in the chair on the end. "No, he'll never admit it, but the death of my sister has taken a toll on him. Most mafia dons ignore their daughters and devote all their time to their sons, but my father was never like that. He was the opposite, if anything. Isabella was his pride and joy, and when we found her body in the sea, well, let's just say he hasn't been the same since the day we buried her."

"Your father has made it clear that he doesn't particularly care for our arrangement. I'm sure he wasn't thrilled with the severed heads on his lawn," I say.

Dominic groans and looks over at me. "That was a bit dramatic."

I smile. "No, it was fun." I shoot a quick look at Vitaly. "And I won."

Vitaly laughs and calls me a fucker. I turn my attention back to Dominic. "Do we need to worry about Antonio deciding to get revenge for anything after our agreement is over?"

"No, we never go back on our word," Dominic says. "There will be no retaliation."

"Good to know," I say.

Danil opens his laptop and shows Dominic the latest information. "This is an image I found of Konstantin from one of the CCTV cameras in Berlin, and Osip is still here in the city. He's staying at the Ritz-Carlton at the moment and making no attempt to hide."

"Okay, so we stop the fake attacks and wait for Konstantin to arrive?"

Roman turns to him. "It might be best if you and Antonio go back to Italy for a few weeks, take a vacation, make it seem like you've been scared off."

Dominic gives a soft laugh. "He's going to love that idea."

"I figured," I tell him, "but it'll look better. We can't afford to fuck anything up when we're this close to finally meeting with him."

Dominic scrubs a hand over his light beard. "I'll make it happen." He turns to me and leans closer. "How's the woman doing? My doctor said

there was no permanent damage done.”

“She’s doing much better, thanks.” I tell him, waiting for what I know is coming next. Men in our line of work don’t do things out of the kindness of their hearts. They do things because it serves a purpose, so when he says, “I told you you’d owe me,” I’m not at all surprised.

“I knew that would come back to bite you in the ass,” Matvey mutters in Russian.

“What do you want?” I ask, since I’d rather just get on with it.

Dominic’s dark eyes meet mine. “I want to be there when you take them out.”

I raise a brow at him. “That was not part of the plan.”

Dominic shrugs. “Change in plans then. I want to help kill them.”

“He could’ve asked you for something far worse,” Vitaly says in Russian.

He’s right. He could’ve asked me for a million things that I’d rather not do, and honor would’ve demanded I do them. His doctor helped Jolene, and that’s a debt I’ll gladly pay.

“It won’t take much effort to include him. More men and more guns might not be such a bad thing,” Roman says.

Dominic waits patiently while my brothers and I discuss the situation in Russian. Matvey switches to English and points a finger at Dominic.

“If we include you in this, then you’ll be taking orders from us. If you do anything that puts Alina’s life at risk, I swear to god I’ll fucking kill you myself.”

Dominic holds his stare before giving him a very slow nod. “I understand your anger, so I’ll forgive the insult and threat. You have my word that I won’t do anything to interfere. I just want to be invited to the party. Grief is a strange thing, and people process it in different ways. I think the only way I can process mine is with blood on my hands. I’m going to kill the man who murdered my sister, but I’d also like to kill the others that are involved.” He gives Matvey a soft smile. “I think it’ll be very healing for me.”

“The best kind of therapy is the kind that leaves your hands bloody,” I say with a smile.

“Yeah, I heard you took your revenge against the man who hurt your woman. I bet that felt good.”

“It did, Dominic,” I say, remembering the way Sebastian’s nose had felt cracking beneath my fist. “It really fucking did.”

I recognize the look in his eyes, and I know he wants someone to take his rage out on, and I’m more than okay with including him. I hold my hand out to him. “We’ll call you, and then we’re even.”

He shakes my hand and nods. “I’ll leave in a few days with my father. Keep me updated if you find out anything new. Otherwise, I’ll reach out when we get back.”

My brothers and I stand to leave while Dominic walks to the door to open it for us. I don’t hate this alliance we have going, and it wouldn’t be a bad thing to remain on friendly terms with the Alessi family after all this is over, but that’s a worry for another day. A lot can happen between now and then, and I’ve got more important things to worry about.

Once we’re back in the SUV and I’ve driven past the surly guard, choosing to flip him off this time instead of the friendly wave I’d given on the way in, I drive us in the opposite direction of the penthouse.

“Are we going to get food?” Vitaly asks, perking up at the thought.

“No, I need to pick something up,” I tell him.

“Then can we get food?”

“Maybe if you behave yourself,” Roman says.

Vitaly laughs and smacks Roman’s shoulder. “Look at him already sounding like a daddy.”

Roman tries to look pissed, but he’s smiling too big to pull it off. I weave through the busy traffic, and when I stop in front of a jewelry store, my brothers give me hell.

“Are you about to buy me something nice?” Vitaly asks, “Or is this what I think it is?”

“I’m sure as hell not about to buy you a diamond ring,” I say with a laugh.

“Congrats, man,” Danil says while Roman smiles and claps me on the back.

Matvey gets out and stands beside me. “I like Jolene. I’m happy for you, brother.”

“Thanks, Matvey,” I tell him, but before I can say anything else, he lowers his head and walks to the entrance.

We follow him into the store, and when I see all the display cases, I think about walking right back out. I’ve been in more fights than I can

count, but seeing all the sparkly shit laid out before me has my heart racing and my palms starting to sweat.

“What can I help you with today?”

I look down at the bubbly saleswoman and run my hand along the back of my neck. “I need an engagement ring,” I say, making her face light up even more.

“We have some beautiful engagement rings along this wall,” she says, guiding me to the right side of the store. We all follow her to the display, and all I see are several rows of what look to be the same damn ring.

“How the hell am I supposed to choose?” I ask my brothers in Russian.

They laugh at me, but I don’t care. I don’t want to fuck this up, but I have no idea what I’m doing. I’ve never bought a present for a woman, let alone an engagement ring. What if I open the box and she hates it?

“Just find the most expensive one and get it,” Vitaly says, winking at the young woman behind the counter and being his usual helpful self.

“That’s terrible advice,” Matvey says. “Ignore him.”

“Already done,” I say and then laugh at the look Vitaly gives me.

“Pick something that reminds you of her,” Roman says.

“Exactly,” Danil agrees.

I stand next to Matvey and lean down to look at the rings. Matvey points a finger at a row of rings that look so big I’m guessing they’d look enormous on Jolene and weigh her hand down.

“Your girl’s favorite outfit is jeans and a hoodie, Lev.” He taps the glass over the giant rings. “This is not her style.”

“Yeah, and she’d never be able to throw a good punch wearing something like that,” I say, making him give a soft laugh.

I start at the end and work my way through every damn ring, stopping when one of them catches my eye. It’s simple compared to the others around it, but it’s no less beautiful. The round diamond is large enough to not hurt my pride, and it’s set on a thin, white gold band that’s covered with smaller diamonds. There’s another thin band that weaves around it, creating a vine-like effect. It’s beautiful, and I can already see it on Jolene’s slender finger. There’s a matching white gold wedding band beneath it, and when I point to the set, the saleswoman smiles and lifts it out for me.

Matvey leans in closer. “I think you found it, brother.”

“That is nice,” Vitaly admits, “and it does look more like Jolene’s style.”

“We’re going to need a matching wedding band for my brother,” Roman tells the saleswoman while smacking me on the back.

She smiles and runs off to grab it. Danil nudges my shoulder. “So when are you asking her?”

“As soon as we get back and in front of everyone,” Vitaly says.

I laugh and shake my head. “Fuck no. It’ll be tonight, but it’s going to be private.”

When the saleswoman comes back with a matching thicker wedding band, I nod my head at her. “I’ll take all three.”

She rings me up with a huge smile on her face, and after I’ve paid, I look over and see Matvey walking back from the other counter, shoving a small bag into his pocket. I know he’s bought another gift for Alina, but I’m not about to bring it up. We all know he buys things for her regularly, but if he wanted to talk about it, he would. He’s in enough pain as it is, and I have no desire to make it worse for him by making him talk about his feelings. Some things are too painful to bring to the light. When we get her back, then we can worry about fixing all the ways this last year and a half have broken him. Until then, if keeping it in the dark helps him get out of bed every morning, then so fucking be it.

When we’re back at the penthouse, Jolene thinks my brothers’ goofy grins are because we’re all still excited about our future nephew. I grab her hand and pull her upstairs, smiling when she hops on my back and kisses my neck. She doesn’t ever get tired of being wrapped around me.

“We’re going to turn the room across from Emily and Roman’s bedroom into a nursery,” she says, and I can hear the excitement in her voice. “She picked out the prettiest robin’s egg blue for the walls, and tomorrow she wants to go shopping with me and Simona to pick out some baby stuff.”

“Not alone you’re not.”

She gives a cute huff and kisses my neck again. “We can take your men if you insist.”

“I insist,” I quickly say, knowing my brothers and I will probably trail them even with the bodyguards. “I’m glad you’re having fun, though.”

Walking us into our room, I set her down and pull her in front of me. “Do you want anything from your dad’s house? I don’t mind going and helping you pack up some stuff.”

“I wouldn’t mind having my clothes and my books,” she admits.

“We’ll go tomorrow morning, and then you can just order anything else that you need.”

She looks around the bedroom. “Are you sure you’re wanting me to move in? I mean, if you don’t want this, or if you’d rather I take one of the other rooms, I want you to tell me.”

My heart breaks a little that she’s even still doubting how I feel about her. I cup her face and kiss her. Keeping my palms against her skin, I run my thumb over her lips, remembering the way she’d sucked my cock in the shower.

“I want you to do a lot more than just move in with me, *malinkaya*.”

Before she can say anything, I reach into my pocket and then lower down to one knee. I’ve never knelt before anyone, and there isn’t another person on the planet that I would willingly do this for. But the woman standing in front of me? I would swallow my pride and crawl across broken glass for her.

“Lev,” she whispers, looking down at me, her beautiful eyes wide with surprise and excitement.

I kiss her left hand before cupping it in mine. “When we first met in that alley, I knew I was in trouble. I wanted you, but more than that, I wanted to *keep* you. I didn’t want to let you go, but I knew that being with me would always put you in danger, so I tried to keep my distance, but I couldn’t.”

My thumb runs over her soft skin, and when her eyes turn glassy, I kiss the back of her hand again, staying there for a few seconds so I can breathe in her comforting scent. When I meet her eyes again, hers are filled with tears that are about to spill over.

“I love you, Jolene. I love you in a way that scares the hell out of me, but I don’t know how to love you any other way. It’s not possible to love you any less, and I wouldn’t want to even if I could. You’re it for me, *malinkaya*, and I will never love anyone else. It’s you or nothing, baby, from the first second I saw you until the end of time. You have my heart, you have all of me, and I will happily spend the rest of my life loving and protecting you. Will you marry me?”

Tears run down her cheeks when I open the small, velvet box and show her the ring. “Yes,” she whispers, holding her shaky hand out so I can slip the ring on. It’s a perfect fit and when I stand up and press my lips to hers, she kisses me like I’m her whole world.

“Did you really say yes?” I ask in between her ravenous kisses.

“Yes,” she moans, giving a soft laugh.

“We’re getting married, baby,” I say, holding her closer.

“We are,” she agrees, smiling as she runs her tongue over my lip ring, giving it a suck that pulls a groan from me. “Now we need to make it official.”

“And how do we do that, *malinkaya*?” I pick her up, cupping her ass as she wraps her legs and arms around me.

“Take me to bed and I’ll show you.”

I laugh and carry her to the bed while she runs her hands through my hair and kisses me like she’ll never be able to get enough. That makes two of us. I’ll never get my fill of her, and right now I’m feeling especially greedy. I want every damn inch of her. I want to hear my fiancée scream my name, and I want to see her come apart beneath my touch again and again, and then I’m going to fall asleep buried inside her and wake her up tomorrow morning with my face between her legs.

Smiling at the thought, I lower her to the bed and press my mouth to hers. There’s nowhere else I’d rather be than right here with her body wrapped around mine, her scent surrounding me, and the taste of her on my tongue. For the first time in my life I’m excited about my future. I’m excited about *our* future, and I can’t wait to experience every second of it with my *malinkaya*.

Epilogue

Jolene
Two Weeks Later

As soon as my eyes open, a wave of nausea hits me that has me leaping from the bed, and it's not at all graceful since Lev's still inside me from last night. The movement causes him to sit up and reach for his gun, looking around for whatever threat must've had me running from the bed. All he sees is me clamping a hand to my mouth as I bolt for the bathroom. He's right on my ass, running after me as I kneel with mere seconds to spare before I lose everything that was in my stomach and then some. I'm too busy vomiting to feel embarrassed when one of his hands rubs my back while the other fists my hair, keeping it away from the toilet.

"It's okay, baby," he murmurs, not seeming the slightest bit put off by what's happening. "I'm right here. I'm not going anywhere."

"Maybe you should," I groan into the bowl as the embarrassment sets in now that I'm empty and it fully hits me that I'm naked and hugging a toilet that I've just vomited into. "This is embarrassing, Lev. I don't want you to see me like this."

He gives a soft laugh. "Like what, *malinkaya*? Pregnant with my baby?" He runs his hand down my spine while my mind races. We both know I'm late for my period. I thought it might just be stress, but he's right. My breasts have been sore, and now I'm throwing up. I may not have been the best student, but even I can do that math.

“Come on, baby,” Lev says, flushing the toilet and helping me up. He sits me on the counter and wets a rag while I grab my toothbrush. I brush while he dabs at my face. He’s studying my reaction, but I’m still trying to process it. It’s a lot to take in. I knew it was a strong possibility. I mean, we’ve been fucking like crazy without protection, this was definitely bound to happen, but I also can’t say I ever planned on being a mom at nineteen. Well, I guess I’ll be twenty by the time the baby is born. I picture a little baby, one with light blue eyes and dark hair, and when I spit out my toothpaste and see Lev raising his newly pierced eyebrow at me, I realize I’m grinning just as big as he is.

“You’re happy?” he asks.

“So ridiculously happy,” I tell him.

He laughs and cups my face. “I still want you to take a test just to be sure, and then we can set up an appointment.” Sliding one hand down, he runs his fingers over my stomach. “We’re going to have to get a car now.”

“We can keep the motorcycle, though, right?”

He laughs at my hopeful tone and kisses the tip of my nose. “We’re never getting rid of the bike, baby.”

Giving me another kiss, he reaches into the drawer next to us and pulls out the pregnancy test he apparently went out and bought at some point. After I’ve shooed him out and taken it, he holds me while we wait, and as soon as it turns positive, he laughs and kisses me.

“I can’t believe there was a time when you weren’t in my life,” he whispers against my lips. “It’s hard to remember how it felt before I met you. I was living half a life, just going through the motions and not even realizing what all I was missing.”

His lips kiss every inch of mine, slow kisses that start at one corner of my mouth and end at the other before he gives my bottom lip a soft suck.

“I could never go back to a life without you, *malinkaya*. We’re going to get married,” he smiles as he says the words, “and we’re going to have a baby, and I’m going to spend the rest of my life loving you and however many babies we have.”

“Let’s just start with the one,” I say, seeing the giddy sort of excitement brewing in his eyes. I know he’s mentally calculating how many times he can get me pregnant before I hit menopause, and I need to put the brakes on that man fantasy with a quickness.

I cup his face to get his attention. "I'm not having babies one right after the other, Lev."

He laughs and puts his hand on my stomach. "But I really like the idea of you pregnant."

"And you have nine months to enjoy it, but I want a few years between them." When he starts to look sad, I say, "Think of it as giving ourselves some fun time in between pregnancies. You can take me for rides on your motorcycle, we can make use of that hot tub on the terrace," I run my hand down his bare chest and abs so I can lightly dance my fingers over his hard cock, "and you can be as rough with me as you want."

He lets out a low groan. "That's a very good point, *malinkaya*. We don't want to rush things too quickly."

"We don't," I agree, grinning when I tighten my hand and he lets out another deep groan.

He leans in closer and grazes his nose along my cheek. "Do you still feel sick?"

"No," I whisper, surprised to find the nausea has passed now that I'm completely empty and focused on something else.

"Good, because I really want to fuck my pregnant fiancée."

With his lips pressed to mine, he lifts me up, palming my bare ass while he carries me back to bed. Laying me down, he hovers his body over mine, always so careful to not put too much weight on me. He doesn't treat me like I'm breakable, though. He never has. He treats me like I'm something precious, like I'm something to be savored.

Trailing a line of kisses along my jaw, he works his way lower, licking and sucking the skin of my neck before flicking his tongue against my collarbone. My hands go to his hair, fingers threading into the silky strands while he kisses lower. When I feel the wet heat of his tongue on my nipple, I moan his name and wrap my legs around his firm waist.

"These are already more sensitive than usual, aren't they, baby?" His tongue flicks against me, pulling another moan from my needy body. He gives a soft laugh at the way I've just answered his question. "I thought so." His lips wrap around me, giving me a hard suck that has my toes curling and my hips rocking up to his, desperate to feel friction against my aching core.

He teases me with his mouth until I'm panting his name and writhing beneath him. Just when I think I can't take a second more of his delicious

torture, he lets go of my breast and kisses down my stomach. Nuzzling his nose against my lower belly, he murmurs in Russian as he kisses every inch of skin.

“What are you saying?”

He lifts his light blue eyes to mine and gives me a wink. “I’m telling our baby that we already love them and can’t wait to meet them.” He gives me one more kiss. “And that they’re so lucky to have you for a mom.”

Before I can get all emotional over what he’s just said, he grabs the backs of my thighs and spreads my legs before scooting down and licking a line up my slit. He groans when he gets a taste of me and parts my lips with his tongue, delving in deep. I keep my hands in his hair and close my eyes, losing myself to the moment. He takes his time, eating me like it’s a fucking gift, like it’s an *honor* that I’ve allowed him. God, this man makes me feel like a goddamn queen. When I start to come, he works me through it, making it last until my body shakes and I’m so sensitive that I’m wiggling away from his greedy mouth. He eases back, kissing around my clit, trailing down to the birthmark he’s obsessed with. He licks and sucks, giving a deep, masculine groan before lifting up and bringing his face back to mine.

Fisting his hair, I pull him closer, kissing him and filling my own mouth with the taste of me. He slides his tongue in deeper, letting me suck on it as he guides the head of his cock to my soaking wet slit. He slides into me with an excruciating slowness that threatens to snap whatever small grip on sanity I still have left. He makes that first thrust last an eternity, allowing me to feel every single piercing until he’s buried so far deep inside me I feel like we’ll never be separate again.

“I love you,” he murmurs against my lips. “Every part of me belongs to you, *malinkaya*, and I wouldn’t want it any other way.”

“I love you too,” I whisper back, holding him tighter when he starts to slowly fuck me. I lose myself in my fiancé, the man who saved me in so many ways and has given me more than I ever dared to hope for. I know I won’t ever have a peaceful, safe life with him. He’s a violent man, and danger will always surround him, but I know he’ll always keep me safe, keep *our* family safe, and that’s more than enough for me.

Loving Lev means loving every part of him, and I do, unconditionally and forever. Following him into that dark alley was the best decision I ever made, and I wouldn’t change a single moment of my shitty upbringing because it brought me to him, and he’s worth everything. Cupping his

beautiful face, I run my thumb over the lip piercing that always makes my heart skip a beat and dig my heels into his perfect ass, making him smile as he speeds up and gives me what I want.

* * *

Lev

The next morning we walk downstairs and my brothers take one look at my beaming face and start clapping me on the back.

Jolene raises a brow in disbelief. “How can they possibly know just by looking at you?”

Vitaly laughs and picks her up, swinging her around in a big hug. He kisses the top of her head when he sets her down. “Because that look right there,” he says, pointing at me, “is the look of a man who’s just claimed his woman in every way possible.”

“Oh my god,” Simona says with a laugh. She turns to Jolene. “Just wait, they’re going to start grunting like apes in a minute.”

Danil smacks her ass with a grin. “I’ll have you making grunting noises in a minute, *sladkaya*.”

Simona blushes but just shakes her head at her crazy husband. Emily rushes over and gives us both hugs. Her belly just keeps getting bigger, and I can’t wait until Jolene is showing. God, the thought of her with a big round belly makes me feel like Simona might be right and that I might start banging my chest and grunting like a damn animal. I look down at my beautiful, pregnant fiancée and smile. This woman makes me downright feral.

She wraps her arms around me and rests her head on my chest. I hold her close while Vitaly grabs vodka for us and lemonade for the three pregnant women as we celebrate with the others, even Matvey walks over to smack my shoulder and smile down at Jolene while he tells us congratulations and that he can’t wait to meet his future niece or nephew.

Before he walks off, he gives her another smile. “I knew I liked you the second I saw you wearing a hoodie.”

“You mean the night I bled all over your car?”

She feels me stiffen at the memory and immediately pats my chest to let me know she's okay.

"Yeah," Matvey says. "Most people wouldn't have handled that as well as you did. You kept your shit together, and you tried to calm Lev down, which is not an easy thing to do."

"Hey, I'm not that bad," I say.

Matvey gives a soft laugh and leans closer to Jolene. "He's worse, actually, but he's calmer when he's around you."

"Thanks, Matvey." She smiles up at him and he ruffles the hair on her head like he used to do to his little sister before she died.

"Welcome to the family, little sis," he says before walking off.

"That was really sweet," Jolene whispers, and I smile at her shaky voice. Her hormones have been all over the place lately, another clue that had convinced me she was pregnant, and when I cup the back of her head and rub circles on her back, she softens against me.

"My family really likes you," I whisper against her hair.

"I really like them too. It's so different from what I'm used to," she admits, and I hate that she had to grow up in such a shitty house with an absent dad and a sick fuck of a brother.

"We became a family because the ones we had weren't worth keeping. We're a family by choice, and now you're a part of that. I can't wait for you to meet Alina. Once we get her back and Vitaly settles down, it'll be complete, and we're going to have so many little babies crawling around," I say, smiling at the image.

"I can't wait to meet Alina and to see Matvey happy. I have my doubts about Vitaly ever settling down, though."

I laugh. "It'll happen." Raising my voice, I look at Vitaly. "Someone's going to knock him on his ass, and then he'll never look at another woman again."

Vitaly looks at me like I've lost my mind. "As fucking if, brother. I think you've gotten one too many piercings. The metal has clearly fucked with your brain."

"He only has two," Emily says, making Roman nearly choke on his drink when Vitaly looks at him and asks, "You didn't tell her about the other nine?"

"Nine?" Emily asks, looking at me with a mix of horror and confusion.

Vitaly raises a glass in our direction. "Jolene is a champ."

“Oh my god,” Jolene whispers against my chest while I laugh and shake my head.

“Someone change the fucking subject.”

Danil laughs at my discomfort and raises his glass. “To the new generation of Melnikovs. Here’s hoping the world can handle it.”

We all drink to our future children while I look around at my family. It’s not the one I was born into, but it’s the one I’d die for and the one I’d choose over and over again. All we need is Alina back to make it complete, and I know without a shadow of a doubt that one day we’ll be raising a glass to a pregnant Alina and a smiling Matvey. It’s those images that keep us all going. We will find her, we will bring her back, and together we’ll help heal her, because this is where she belongs. This is where she’s always belonged, standing with her brothers and next to the man that she’s been in love with her whole life, and none of us will stop until we’ve made that happen.

We spend the day hanging out with everyone and ordering food, and when it starts getting late and Jolene yawns, I kiss her head and carry her to bed. She tries to argue and say she’s not tired, but I ignore her and then laugh when she gives me a cute eye roll. I watch her get ready for bed, and then help her undress before stripping out of my own clothes.

I’m not the kind of guy who would ever use the phrase *making love*, but that’s exactly what I do to her. I fuck her slowly, thoroughly, and everything I do, every touch, every kiss, every thrust of my cock, is me showing her how goddamn much I love her and how she’s my entire world. I worship her, giving her everything I have, and when she finally collapses against me, completely spent and exhausted, I keep myself buried inside her and close my eyes. I’m living a life I don’t deserve, but knowing it just makes me appreciate it all the more. I tighten my hold on her and fall asleep surrounded by the woman who stole the heart I didn’t even know I had, and now it will only ever beat for her.

THE END

Thank you so much for reading! I hope you enjoyed it, and Vitaly's story is coming soon!

In case you missed the first two books in the series, you can get them here!

[Paved in Blood](#)
[Paved in Venom](#)

In the meantime, please keep reading to get a free bonus epilogue—the Melnikov brothers go baby shopping and a very spicy helmet scene—and to find out about my other spicy Bratva books!

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Thank You!

I hope you enjoyed Jolene and Lev's story. I can't wait to hear what you all think of it!

If you have the time, I'd be so grateful if you could leave a review. Every review helps my books get seen by more people, so even if it's just a star review, it really means the world to me!

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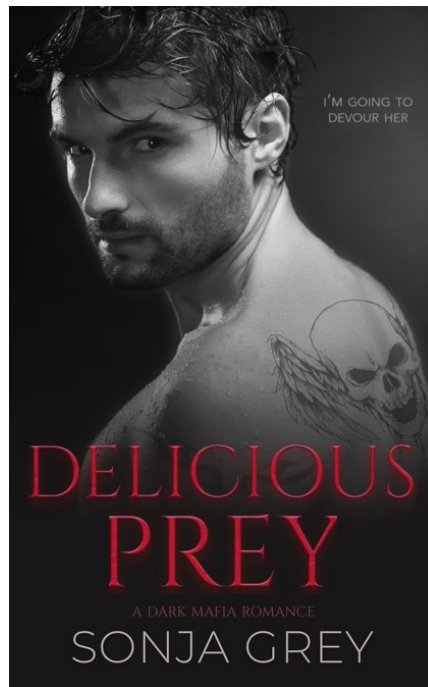
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Delicious Prey

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A Dark Hitman Standalone Romance



[Delicious Prey.](#)

**It was my testimony that put him away for life,
but now he's escaped and standing in my bedroom.**

Lydia:

Kirill Chernikov is a deadly hitman for a powerful Bratva,
and it's my eyewitness testimony that puts him away for life.

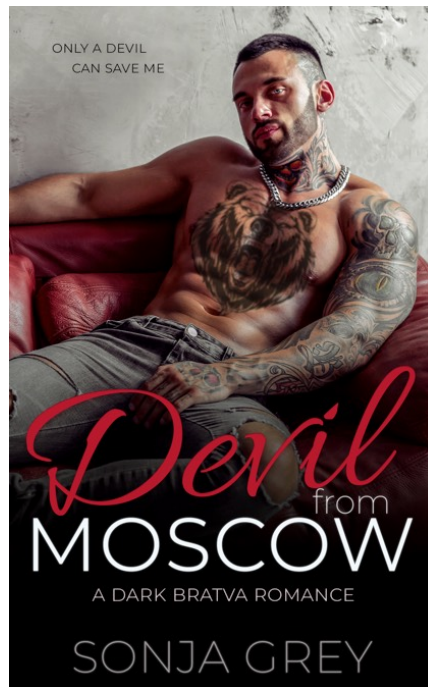
He's the monster who killed my dad...at least I think he is.
The truth is I didn't see his whole face that night.
I saw a tall man with a powerful, deadly build, and one hell of a chiseled jaw.
The police convinced me it was Kirill, and he's the one I pointed out in the courtroom.
After he was sent away, I thought it was over, but it's only just begun.
Turns out he's a little, I mean a lot, obsessed with me.
He sends me letters from prison, has someone watching me at all times, and tells me I'm not allowed to date anyone.
I'm his and only his.
I should be disgusted.
I'm not.
He makes me want things I shouldn't, and when he escapes, I'm the first thing he comes for.
He makes it clear that he won't be spending another night away from me ever again.
He's a man who doesn't like to be disobeyed.
And he's decided I'm his.

Kirill:
I've spent my life building a reputation that ensures everyone fears me.
I have no attachments. No one gets close.
But all that changes when I see Lydia.
I can't get her out of my head.
I'm an obsessed man with nothing but time.
I may be in prison now, but I'll be escaping soon,
and when I do, I'm coming for her.
Once she's in my arms, I'm never letting go of my delicious prey.
I'm going to devour her piece by piece.

Devil from Moscow

OceanofPDF.com

Medvedev Bratva



[Devil from Moscow](#)

3 books in series—series complete!

I never expected to fall for a devil.

Nina:

You know the story where the hero comes in and saves the day, rescuing the heroine right in the nick of time?

This isn't that story.

Instead of a knight in shining armor, he's a sexy, tatted-up Bratva boss with a reputation for being brutal and fierce.

Vasily finds me after I've already been brought to my lowest—broken by cruel men until I barely recognize myself.

He doesn't offer me salvation.

He offers me protection and revenge.

And I gladly take it.

Because I don't need a knight in shining armor.

I need a villain who doesn't mind getting his hands dirty, a man who will make those bastards pay for what they did to me.

I never expected to fall for the devil with blood on his hands.

I never expected to crave the comfort of his powerful body.

But our arrangement quickly turns into something more as he teaches me what real pleasure feels like, and soon I'm addicted.

Vasily:

When I first saw her, she was broken, alone, scared.

I couldn't leave her, so I did the only thing I could do.

I claimed her as my own and gave her the protection of my name.

She knows who I am, knows my reputation and the bloody stories they tell about me.

But she's not the one who needs to fear me.

It's all the men that hurt her who need to be scared.

Because I'm coming for them.

One by one I'm going to take down every single person who dared to hurt what's mine.

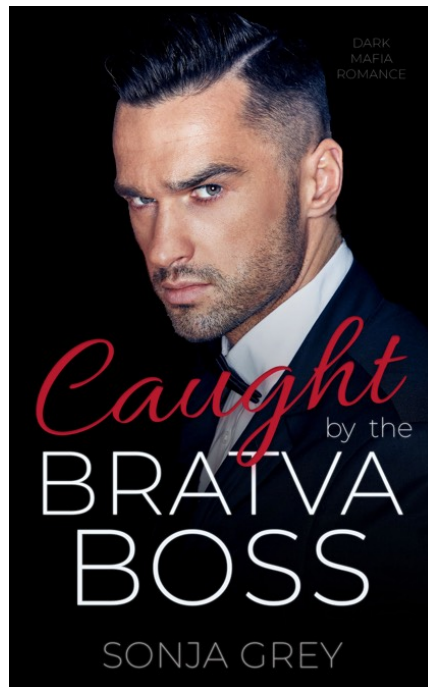
Because Nina *is* mine.

She was mine the second she wrapped her arms around me and begged me for help, and I'm never letting her go.

Caught by the Bratva Boss

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Fedorov Bratva



Caught by the Bratva Boss!
3 books in series—Series Complete!

**Mikhail Fedorov is the most powerful Bratva boss in town,
and I've just broken into his house.**

Charlotte:
This was supposed to be an easy score.

In and out.

No harm, no foul.

But when Mikhail catches me red-handed and wraps those strong arms around me, telling me in his sexy accent that I picked the wrong damn house to rob, I know my goose is cooked.

I expect the police and a future behind bars,
but this Bratva boss has other plans for me.

Locked in his house with no way to escape, the tension between us builds to the breaking point.

He taunts me, pushes all my buttons, and leaves me wanting so much more.
The only question is which one of us is going to break first.

Mikhail:

No one steals from me and lives, but the beautiful thief I've just caught has me rethinking that credo.

She's a scared little rabbit before the wolf, but I can't let my sweet bunny just walk away, not after she realizes who I am and what I've done.

And especially not after I get a taste of just how sweet she really is.

No, I'm keeping her, whether she likes it or not.

Russian Boxing Club Series

If you'd like more age gap, steamy romances, then please check out the Russian Boxing Club series! It's an interconnected series, but they can be read in any order.

Forbidden Age Gap!
[My Russian Obsession](#)

Enemies-to-Lovers Age Gap!
[My Russian Temptation](#)

Second Chance Age Gap!
[My Russian Salvation](#)

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About the Author

Just like her last name, Sonja loves morally grey alphas with a hidden heart of gold. She loves strong men with mile-wide soft spots for the women they love and who will stop at nothing to keep them safe.

She writes mainly dark mafia steamy romances where the lines between good and bad blur into a beautiful, sexy shade of grey.

Zero cheating and HEAs are always guaranteed!

She can be reached at sonja@sonjagreyauthor.com



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